

NYPL RESEARCH LIBRARIES



3 3433 08234604 4

PNAR SON OF PTC

GEORGE LANGFORD





GEO. LANGFORD
(WITH TUSK OF PREHISTORIC ELEPHANT)
AUTHOR OF
"KUTNAR-SON OF PIC"
SECOND VOLUME IN THE
LONG AGES AGO SERIES.
BONI & LIVERIGHT \$1.25



Juvenile Literature Fiction (

THE LONG AGES AGO SERIES

(VOLUME ONE — PIC-THE WEAPON-MAKER)

KUTNAR—SON OF PIC

Manfred
N.Y.



GONCH AND THE MIREED MAMMOTH

KUTNAR SON OF PIC

BY
GEORGE LANGFORD

ILLUSTRATED BY THE AUTHOR

BONI AND LIVERIGHT
PUBLISHERS NEW YORK

29471A

COPYRIGHT, 1921,
BY BONI & LIVERIGHT, INC.

All rights reserved

Printed in the United States of America

TO MY MOTHER

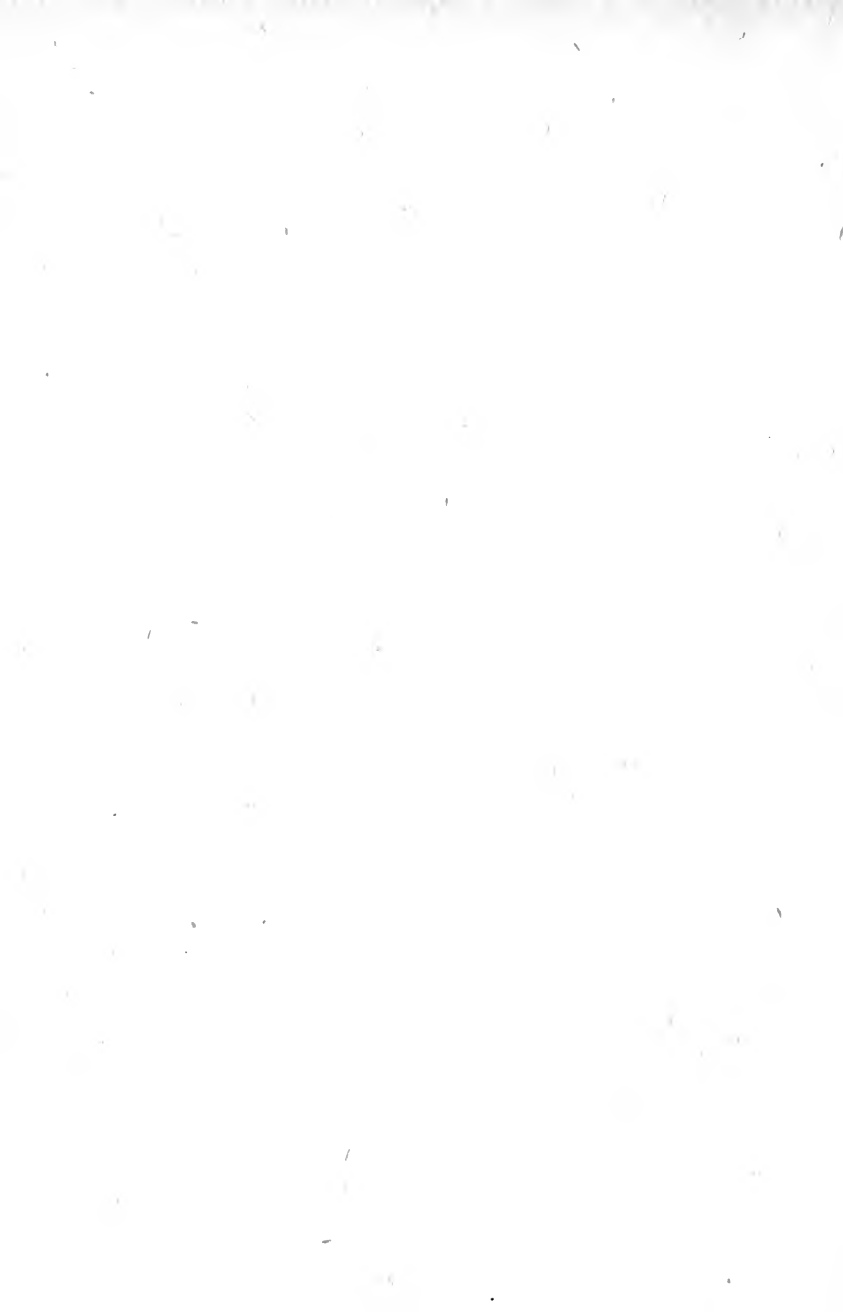
Digitized by the Internet Archive
in 2007 with funding from
Microsoft Corporation

LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

Gonch and the Mired Mammoth	<i>Frontispiece</i>
Gonch and the Wolves	11
"Three men were ascending to the cave-threshold" . .	21
"Man and boy were charging upon the beasts at top speed"	35
The Fall of the Tilting Stone	45
"There stood Pic"	53
"Friends should ever help each other"	61
"You must stay behind"	75
The leader of the Cave Hyenas brings news	83
The Pursuit	89
The Cave Lion Cub learning how to shoot	95
Wulli defies the Cave Beasts	105
"He sank to his knees, dizzy and scared"	115
"A shaggy beast hove in sight"	119
"His fall had ripped a large patch of wool from his trousers' seat"	125
The Journey across the Pyrenees	129

	PAGE
Kutnar bags a hare	141
The Hetman loses patience	151
"Gonch recovered by degrees"	165
"The Cave Bear looked up and growled"	181
Pic astonishes his friends	187
"The unknown was plucked from his burrow"	193
"Hiss! something whistled past"	203
The Battle of the Giants	207
"Down he fell"	217

KUTNAR—SON OF PIC



KUTNAR—SON OF PIC

I

TOTAN, hetman of the northern Spanish cave-folk, sat upon the threshold of Castillo, watching a party of men coming toward him up the mountainside. His people, to the number of eighty or more, were behind him gathered about a roaring fire. All were clad in the skins of beasts and armed with wooden clubs and javelins. They stared down at the newcomers with hungry wolfish eyes.

Those approaching from below were short, thick-set men with hairy bodies and bent limbs—gaunt, hollow-cheeked and beast-like, and yet men. They clambered up to the cavern threshold where Totan and his band awaited them.

In the van strode Gonch the Muskman. All greeted him in sullen silence, for it was plain to be seen that neither he nor his companions brought food of any kind. Totan rose to his feet livid with rage. He was a giant in strength, a grotesque and misshapen Hercules, bandy-legged and short-armed. His head was apparently without neck,

so closely did it set upon his brawny shoulders. His low forehead sloped to a pair of heavily bone-ribbed eyes and thick aquiline nose. His big bull-teeth gleamed from his protruding muzzle. His bushy brows were drawn down in a terrible scowl.

"No food!" he roared. "Again our hunters return empty-handed. We must eat. *Who* shall it be?" He glared fiercely from one man to another. All cringed before him like beaten curs. He was about to vent his wrath upon Gonch, the leader of the party, when his eyes lifted with astonishment at sight of something in the Muskmán's right hand.

"Where—where did you get that?" he stammered.

A look of triumph came over Gonch's face. He opened his hand and held it palm upward so that all could see. There lay a superb flint-blade; large, well-formed and keen-edged. It was the finest stone weapon that the Castillans had ever seen.

"A marvelous flint," said Gonch. "It was made by the Mammoth Man."

Totan emitted an astonished grunt. His head may have been as dense as his muscles, but he could tell a fine blade when he saw one. Speech was a laborious process at best and now he could find no words to say.

"It was in the low country," Gonch said, pointing eastward to the rock-strewn plains bordering the River Pas. "We found a man."

He paused impressively. Not a sound broke the

stillness. All held their breaths and waited in suspense for his next words.

"He was a strange man," Gonch continued. "He lay upon his back. The flesh was wasted from his bones. He gave me this flint hoping thereby to escape death. I questioned him to learn how it came into his possession. He said that it was the work of the Mammoth Man."

Totan began to find the use of his tongue.

"The Mammoth Man? Who is he?"

"Hetman of a far-off tribe," Gonch replied. "Leader of skilled hunters who have prospered mightily because of him. He makes flints like this one and supplies them to his men."

Totan sneered incredulously. "Their leader a flint-worker? That is hard to believe."

"The man said so," Gonch maintained stoutly; "and I believe he told the truth as to the flints. He also told lies. Because of them I killed him."

"Good food gone to waste," Totan growled. "You should have brought his carcass here."

Gonch rubbed his stomach with one open hand all the time grinning like a hyena. Gone to waste? Hardly. Gonch was never guilty of such carelessness as that. He was a prince of cannibals and his body so reeked with the stench of his man-feasting that he smelled like a flesh-eating beast. For that reason men called him the Muskman.

"The stranger lied about the Mammoth Man; a giant mightier than the Hairy Elephant; one who has made the beasts his slaves; his home, a

lion's den; and yet a man who will neither hunt nor fight."

"Coward," sneered the hetman.

"No doubt," Gonch agreed. "And yet he must be a flint-worker of extraordinary skill. This blade proves that; and he who made it can make more. If he made them for us, our hunting would be a very different matter. We would have all we wanted of meat and hides."

"Aye, that's true," said Totan with a sigh.

"What a pity he is not here to make us the fine blades. Does he live so very far away?"

"Very, very far," replied Gonch, gazing to the northeast. "His is a tribe of big strong men who live in a broad valley near a river winding between walls of stone. All are armed with these weapons and know how to use them."

The hetman looked at the ground and shook his head. "So far away and the men are big and strong. Our warriors would not have much chance fighting them with sticks. I fear that we cannot secure the fine weapons."

"Um-m, I am not so sure about that," said Gonch craftily. "Even though it be a long journey and strong men to contend with, I believe that I can do it."

The crowd of cave-men stared and gasped. Totan only sneered:

"You? Be careful with your boasting or you will be the choice for our next meal."

Gonch shuddered. He feared the giant Totan.

HAD it not been for the latter, he would not long have contented himself with second place among the Castillan cave-men. It was his brain against the hetman's brawn and so far, brawn had the best of it.

"It is not a question of strength," he said. "If I go to the Mammoth Man's country, I will be only a fox among wolves. In no other way can I finally secure the blades."

"Ugh!" Totan grunted. "And so you intend to steal them. You will get only a cracked head for your pains."

Gonch laughed scornfully.

"Steal them? No indeed. I know of a much better way than that. I will go to the far-off country and see the Mammoth Man. When I return, I will bring with me——"

"The flints?" growled Totan.

"No, the Mammoth Man himself. Flints without him would in time be lost or broken, but with him, when they are lost or broken, he can make more."

II

GONCH toiled until dusk making ready for the beginning of his undertaking on the morrow. His was no small task and he overlooked nothing in the way of preparation. Those were days when even a short journey invited many dangers and privations, particularly for one travelling alone. Men went about in small bands as a rule and rarely ventured far from their caves. And yet knowing all this, the Muskman was determined to carry out the bold project he had planned.

His equipment consisted of a hide, a wooden javelin with fire-hardened point and a flint-ax. The latter, his main reliance, was his recently acquired blade bound to a long wooden haft. He had spent much time upon this his masterpiece. "No man with such a weapon need starve," he calculated. Had Gonch thought otherwise, he would never have considered making the journey. The hide he carried was intended as a body covering when he stopped at night to rest. Provisions he had none because the Castillan larder was as bare as a bone. He must depend upon his own hunting from the very start.

At sunrise the next day, he stood at the cave-

mouth fully equipped for his perilous undertaking. He warmed himself by the fire which burned at the threshold. This was to be the last time he did so for many a long day. Fire meant health and comfort; more than that, frequently it was all that stood between the cave-men and death. Men treasured it even more than they did their lives. Gonch was now leaving his one and only true friend: the fire that blazed upon the cave-hearth.

Every Castillan was on hand to bid the Muskman farewell. The children, those which famine and disease had spared, looked upon him wonderingly. The women admired. The men had caught the spirit of this adventure. Any or all of them would have been glad to accompany him, had he but said the word. But the word was not said. This was a one-man project requiring much thought and care for its successful execution and Gonch would trust nobody but himself. His was a bold undertaking which promised rich returns if successful. He was to see the Mammoth Man in person and persuade or force that wonderful being to return to Castillo with him. Once there, he would make flint weapons for his new masters and the whole tribe would prosper accordingly. It was an admirable conception. All that remained was for the Muskman to carry it out.

As he left the fire, the cave-men pressed about him to wish him good luck. Totan alone stood aloof scowling ferociously. He was chief of the Castillans and Gonch only second man but in the

latter he saw possibilities of a dangerous rival; not one whom he need fear in single combat but who might accomplish by chicanery what he could not do by force. The hetman was saying to himself: "You have undertaken too much, vain boaster. If you are lucky enough to escape death in the far-off country, you will find it here when you return to disappoint us"; and Gonch was thinking at the same time as he observed the hetman glaring at him: "I am not risking my life for you, stupid pig. Some day you and all the rest of these savages will be my slaves." Then he turned away and clambered down the mountain side while the men of Castillo yelled themselves hoarse and finally returned to the fire to warm themselves, leaving the Muskman to go the rest of his way alone.

His path led directly eastward along the northern slopes of the Cantabrian Mountains. It was a strange country to him, once he had travelled several days journey beyond the province of Castillo. Its inhabitants—men and beasts—were strange too and looked askance at the intruder—a lone man armed with a flint-ax and wooden spear. However, Gonch led a charmed life. He met occasional bands of roving hunters, some of which he fled from and others avoided by concealing himself.

Animals were far more numerous than human beings. Gonch encountered them everywhere and at all times, singly and in groups, packs and herds: horse, bison and long-horned ox of the meadow lands; moose, boar and stag of the forests; and

various other lesser creatures of field, hill and glade. As a rule, all grazing and browsing animals made a practice of avoiding the rough country where rocks, hills and thickets abounded, for in such regions all manner of flesh-eaters made their homes. It was not a fellow feeling that attracted the cannibal man to the rough country. He felt more at home there because it suited his physical being best. This refers mainly to his foot structure. Short heels and flexible toes were best fitted for clambering over cliffs and through the timber; not for travelling hard level roads. And so Gonch sought the broken region which, although his favorite element, had its drawbacks, for now he came in close contact with the prowling flesh-eaters.

Hyenas were too cowardly to attack him and lynxes, which usually hunted singly, he looked upon as a fair match because of his flint-ax; a formidable weapon in the hands of a strong and courageous man. Gonch was a strong and courageous man who feared no beast nor human being, Totan alone excepted. His knowledge of woodcraft, powers of scent, sight and hearing were a match for any animal. These gifts in addition to his human wit and cunning carried him through many apparently hopeless situations.

A fortnight of incessant plodding brought him to a broad pass running through the Cantabrians from north to south. A river flowed through it to the Gascon Gulf. As he stood upon the bank of this river, his sharp ears caught the sound of dis-

tant howls coming from behind him. Far away he saw a group of animals, mere specks racing over the hills and after him full cry. Fastening his hide and weapons about his shoulders in a pack so as to leave his arms free, Gonch waded into the river and swam across. On nearing the eastern shore, he made no effort to continue his flight, not even attempting a landing but remaining in the water which reached to above his knees. Here he rid himself of his spear and hide, tossing them to the bank above his head. Thus free of all encumbrance except his ax, he rested and made ready to defend himself.

The howling grew louder and as the fugitive looked to the west bank from whence he had come, he saw a dozen or more wolves tearing down the slopes to where he had first entered the water. Here the trail was lost and for a time the fierce beasts were at fault running up and down near the water's edge and occasionally stopping to look across the river; but finally all waded in and the flotilla of heads came sailing across the stream. Gonch stood motionless in the water awaiting them, holding his ax in his jaws and with a stone snatched from the river bottom, held in either hand. As the pack came within throwing range, they were greeted with a volley of stones, one following another as fast as Gonch could pluck them from the river-bed. This was more than his assailants had bargained for. Many of the missiles reached their marks and the howls changed to yelps of pain. The



GONCH AND THE WOLVES

wolves of the mountain slopes were a poor lot compared with their giant cousins, the Cave and Timber variety, or the Muskman would probably have been obliged to finally decide the issue at close quarters with the flint-ax. However, in the present circumstances, this proved unnecessary. His enemies, although having stomach for food, had little for fighting and were only too glad to swim back the way they had come as soon as they found themselves getting the worst of it.

Finding himself in no further immediate danger, Gonch climbed the bank, recovered his spear and hide and then resumed his journey. Near the eastern terminus of the Cantabrians, a region of rocks and ravines, he was obliged to pass through the lion country. This was by far the most difficult and most dangerous portion of his journey. It would appear that the good fortune he had experienced thus far was about to desert him, for just when he needed his wits and strength most, an attack of mountain influenza sapped his vitality and almost destroyed his power of scent. He strove to continue but finding the task too great while the malady was upon him, he climbed to the loftiest and most inaccessible rocks he could find, there to lie in his hide-wrappings in a torment of pain and burning fever.

For two long nights and days, he lay there while great shaggy lions glided in and out among the rocks and underbrush, snarling and growling and frequently emitting thunderous roars, for in some

way it had become known to them that a puny Trog-man had dared intrude upon their domains. During the second night of his sickness, Gonch's fever left him and he became conscious of what was going on about him. Above his head was the dark blue sky and a full moon flooding the country with its jejune light. Below him, the rocks cast deep shadows one upon another. Then appeared other shadows which moved to the accompaniment of low snuffling growls and he discerned four figures crawling at the foot of the very rocks among whose tops he lay hidden. Even one lion would have found Gonch easy prey, but here were four with many others no doubt not far distant.

Fortunately none of the animals ascended to where the Muskman had taken refuge. Perhaps his scent had grown cold or perhaps his trackers felt a certain timidity about rushing too blindly upon one whose very boldness suggested unknown power to defend himself. When the daylight came, they went away, thus enabling the Muskman to drag himself down to where a tiny stream of water spouted from the rocks. He cooled his parched lips and aching head and this gave him strength enough to kill a rabbit by the well-aimed blow of a stone pitched by his hand. The food gave him further strength and after climbing back to his nest and securing a refreshing sleep, he was enabled to proceed upon his way.

He encountered lions and panthers before he reached the level country but he managed to escape

them all. He survived hunger and cold. Storm, torrent, avalanche; all swept above and around him leaving him unscathed. It now seemed as though some kind fate had chosen to watch over this evil man; evil because he had never known good and whose bold purpose would never have been undertaken had it not promised to result in his own selfish advancement. He arrived safely at the western terminus of the Pyrenees mountains and avoided the difficulties of their passage by deviating northward to the shores of the Gascon Gulf then eastward once more into the lowlands of southwestern France. This latter was a soggy region watered by many creeks and larger streams whose origin might have been traced to the northern slopes of the Pyrenees. Gonch had a hard time of it getting past all this; wading, swimming and dragging his mud-laden feet through bogs and sloughs. After crossing the Garonne River, the worst of his journey was over, for between it and the Dordogne, lay much of his favorite rugged country; broad tablelands, cliffs and ravines, frequently broken by dense brakes and groups of forest trees. When finally the Dordogne River was passed, he adopted extra precautions and took more pains to conceal himself, for now all signs pointed to the proximity of human beings.

A mile or more upstream from where he had crossed the Dordogne, the river was joined by one of its northern tributaries, the Vézère. The latter meandered through a deep rock-channel with

stately cliffs and fertile meadows alternating along its banks. The cliffs in many places extended almost to the river margin; in others, they lay far back. The valley between them was but a wide ditch cut through a limestone plateau with a river winding through it from side to side. "A river winds through a broad valley between walls of stone"; Gonch suddenly recalled the stranger's words. He glowed with the excitement of discovery and gazed eagerly at the distant cliffs which as much as said:

"This is man's country; probably the home of him you have come to see." Soon he observed a faint haze ascending above the rocks and so he proceeded in that direction, following the right bank of the Vézère or rather the border of the plateau which overlooked it. Finally his nose caught whiffs of smoke and he saw white wreaths ascending above the cliffs ahead of him. Throwing himself flat on his chest and stomach, he wriggled his way to the edge of the plateau and peered over.

To his disappointment, he saw nothing, for the rock-wall leaned outward and he could only guess what might be beneath. However, there was a deep rift in the plateau. It was near at hand and led down almost to the valley, so he dropped into that and made his way to the outlet. From there, twenty feet above the ground crouching low so as to escape being seen, he had a clear view of what was transpiring in the valley below.

III

THE overhanging cliff was a rock-shelter and a score or more men were sitting around a fire at its base. The fire presented a most cheering aspect. Gonch could almost feel its warmth and taste the burning flesh whose inviting aroma now filled his nostrils. Neither fire nor cooked meat had been his portion for a long time. The men of the rock-shelter were enjoying themselves thoroughly, talking and making strange faces at one another. Hyenas and wolves laughed when engaged in unusual acts of cruelty. Gonch had often done likewise but in his grimaces was none of the good-feeling that lighted the features of those he now saw. They were hunters gathered about the fire and searing the flesh of the game they had recently killed; all strong fine-looking young men, warming and enjoying themselves. Each man's weapons lay close beside him upon the ground. The Muskman's eyes sparkled as he espied the lustrous flint gleaming from every long shaft and handle. "I have reached my goal at last," he chuckled softly. "This is the domain of the Mammoth Man."

One of the band now detached himself from his fellows and descended the river bank to drink. He

was a young man, an unusually young one to be consorting with hunters and warriors. He was on hands and knees bending over the water when something stirred in the bushes above him. Some beast lay concealed close to where the young man or boy was slaking his thirst. Gradually its head and back rose above the green foliage, as a large panther preparing to spring.

The big cat was in the very act of launching itself upon the lad when a loud yell made it pause. The next moment, a man with uplifted ax bounded down the rock-wall and dashed upon the beast. A terrific commotion ensued as the cave-men seized their weapons and leaped to their feet shouting and yelling. They saw the newcomer charge into the bushes. A giant cat's head and shoulders rose up to meet him and in a jiffy, man and panther were struggling to the death.

The stranger struck one blow. He could not determine its effect nor strike a second, for the beast was upon him. A dozen warriors rushed to his aid. Something crashed down upon his head and when he came to, he was lying upon the ground while somebody wiped his face with a bunch of leaves. The leaves were wet and red. Men's faces were bending over him. The hunters were jabbering and pointing at the body of a large feline stretched motionless beside him. "The beast would have slain you but for him," said a voice.

"Yes, I know," said another—the boy who wiped the face of the stricken man. "Who is he?"

"He came from the sky," spoke up a third. "I saw him flying through the air. A stranger and yet his ax-blade is the same as ours."

The stranger was by this time sufficiently recovered to sit up. The cave-men crowded about him.

"Who are you? From where did you come?" asked one.

"He smells like a cave-beast," said another. "Perhaps he came here to hunt."

"To hunt panthers," the boy laughed. "A queer odor but what of that? He saved me from death."

He was a sturdy lad of about sixteen years, clean-cut and well-muscled. He wore a strip of rawhide wound several times about his waist. A skin-pouch filled with large pebbles hung from his shoulder.

"My name is Gonch," said the man rubbing his sore head. "The cave-beasts are my enemies. I have not yet washed from my body the taint of their killing. One panther more; what does it matter?"

Those about him lifted their eyebrows and stared at him who made so light of his prowess.

"Killer of flesh-eating beasts? That is good," said a man, "but he has not yet told us why he comes here."

"Who are you to question a chief?" retorted Gonch scornfully. "I will answer to only one; him I have come to see."

"Who is that?" asked the man abashed by the stranger's authoritative tone.

"The Mammoth Man." Gonch gazed from one huntsman to another, to see the effect of this. All faces were now turned toward the boy.

"I can take you to him," said the latter. "When you are able to walk, we will go."

"Where?" asked Gonch.

The lad pointed up the bank to where a line of cliffs extended far into the valley. "He lives there; I live there too. We can go together."

"Who are you?"

"Kutnar," replied the boy. His face expanded in a broad grin. "I can show you where you wish to go as well as anybody, for I am the son of the Mammoth Man."

IV

THE Rock of Moustier, a truncated pyramid of buff limestone, was but a portion of the distant plateau jutting far into the valley to the right bank of the Vézère River. On one side of the Rock, a steep causeway of broken stone led to a broad deep ledge midway between base and summit. This ledge served as the threshold of a grotto which opened into the wall back of the ledge.

Three men all carrying heavy burdens were ascending the causeway to the cave-threshold, while above, stood a fourth, waiting as though to receive them. He was a large man of mighty chest and shoulders and yet neither overfleshed nor muscle-bound but fibred and corded from neck to heel like a fight-trained lion. The newcomers were big strong men but he who stood upon the ledge seemed a giant beside them. They greeted him with a certain deference that marked the larger man as a person of more than ordinary importance. One by one they cast down their burdens upon the rock-platform and squatted beside them. These consisted of several bison hides, bundles of faggots, a leg of venison and several large stones about the size of a man's head.



"THREE MEN WERE ASCENDING TO THE CAVE-THRESHOLD"

After a hasty survey of the various articles, the giant's interest centered upon the stones. He selected one of them and held it in the palm of his left hand. This was done seemingly without effort and but for his swelling biceps, one might have thought the stone a trifling weight. Using a large pebble as a maul, he struck the stone a resounding blow, separating it in two halves as cleanly as though cut with a knife. The newly fractured surfaces were wax-like in appearance and of a lustrous grey color. The giant smiled broadly and nodded to the three men. He seemed much pleased with the stones and well he might be, for they were the finest of beeswax flint. All about him were strewn chips of similar material; small piles of blanks and partly finished flakes. Near the cave-entrance lay many much used mauls and hammerstones of various shapes and sizes; the tools of the flint artisan.

One of the three men coughed noisily. Having delivered their goods, the trio were growing impatient. They wanted their pay.

The giant set aside the flint lump and hammerstone and brought out from the grotto a small hide full of finished flints, all nicely shaped, edged and pointed. They were of various shapes and sizes, each one designed for a special purpose; small tools for scraping hides, knife-blades, dart-heads and axes. The three men bent over them expressing by word and gesture their appreciation of every piece. One of them gathered up the four corners

of the hide and swung it over his shoulder; then the trio descended the causeway to the valley below.

The giant weapon-maker was preparing to turn again to the flint-lumps when he caught sight of two figures making their way up the causeway toward him. The giant smiled upon one of them—a boy—then gazed inquiringly at the other. The pair reached the ledge. As the unknown stepped upon the rock-platform, he bent low and laid down his ax with much ceremony, then stood erect with both hands raised high above his head. Strangers with good intentions always behaved themselves in this manner—presenting themselves unarmed and at the mercy of them they visited. The boy came quickly forward and for several minutes spoke in low tones to the giant, glancing from time to time at his companion. The flint-worker's face fairly beamed as he listened.

The youth explained the circumstances of his meeting with the stranger, enlarging upon his own narrow escape from the panther and how his benefactor had so nearly paid the penalty of death for the part he had chosen to play.

"Good," said the giant when the boy had finished. "Friends should ever help each other." With that, he picked up the stranger's ax and presented it to him, then led his guest to a fire which burned near by.

The Muskman's brain was in a whirl. He had accomplished wonders in a single day. So long had he known naught but hostility from man and beast

that this peaceful reaction from danger and privation, to say nothing of his recent mauling, nigh overwhelmed him. He passed one hand across his forehead where the blood had not yet dried.

"The boy tells me that you leaped upon the panther from the sky," the giant now said. "Men do not leap from the sky however. How and why did you come here?"

Gonch felt the other's piercing gaze directed full upon him. The deep-set eyes seemed to be searching his inmost soul.

"Mine is a restless spirit," he replied. "It has led me through many lands to see strange and wonderful things. I have been told of the Mammoth Man, maker of the finest flint-blades the world has ever seen. Are you he?"

"I am called many names," said the stalwart flint-worker with a twinkle of his deep-set eyes.

"To some, I am known as Pic, the Weapon Maker; to others—but no matter. One name is as good as another. Yes, I am the Mammoth Man." He folded his arms across his broad chest and even as he looked kindly upon his visitor, his eyes as much as said: "Can it be possible that mere curiosity has brought you here—to see me?"

Gonch did not notice the look of those eyes; he was watching the man himself. Such evidence of physical health and strength, he had never before observed in a human being. "I can see now why they call him the Mammoth Man," he thought to himself. "He is a giant among men as is the Hairy

Elephant among beasts." But all he said was:

"I helped your boy. Perhaps for that you can look upon me as a friend."

Pic's eyes softened. He looked down at the ground and replied sadly: "Yes, you have done me a great service. Since his mother died, he is all I have."

"Why not get another?" the Muskman suggested. "Women are plentiful enough. A man like you could have any or all of them."

Pic scowled and raised his hand in protest. "She is gone," he muttered hoarsely. "None can take her place; and of this you need say no more."

Gonch was taken aback by this peculiar display of sentiment. "One woman?" he sniffed: "Ridiculous. The man is a giant but a simpleton for all that. All giants are simpletons." But now that Pic had declared himself upon the subject of women, Gonch prated of the southland; its fine climate, abundance of game and the strong men who lived there; painting the picture in such brilliant colors that he almost believed in it himself. But in spite of his eloquence, Pic remained unmoved. Whether he believed or not, he showed no more than ordinary interest. There was a note of sarcasm in the flint-worker's voice as he made brief comment: "If this is so, why do you come here?" to which in spite of his eloquence Gonch could find no ready answer.

The latter took another tack. "Men say that you are a mighty hunter," he began; "and that you

scorn such small game as the ox and bison, reserving your great strength for the Lion and Hairy Elephant."

Pic's nostrils swelled. There was a sinister glitter in his eyes as he directed them full upon his guest. "Who says that?" he growled. Then without waiting for a reply, he added: "Men who are wise, do not speak to me of the Lion and Mammoth in the same breath."

"Agh, I forgot," muttered Gonch completely abashed, "It was of another they spoke. You are a flint-worker who neither hunts nor fights."

Pic scowled at this impudence and was on the point of replying angrily, when he checked himself as a thought suddenly occurred to him.

"Hunt? Fight?" he said sternly: "It is well that you reminded me. You are a stranger here and should know our rules. Listen to them and heed them well for it is quite necessary that they be most carefully observed."

"Rules?" Gonch awaited curious. His host now spoke in a tone of authority and yet he had mentioned "ours." A chieftain would have said "my rules."

"There are three of these rules," said Pic in his most impressive manner, holding up three fingers by way of illustration. "The first concerns our young men. It is not permitted for them to do any unnecessary quarrelling among themselves. If they should quarrel, it must be a fair fight and for some good reason."

"He must be joking," thought Gonch. "No fighting? Whoever heard of such a thing?"

"Our second rule is equally simple," Pic went on. "Also equally important. There must be no waste of game. The valley abounds with animals of every kind and they are easily caught. We wish these conditions to continue. Without beef or venison, we would starve and so these animals should neither be alarmed nor driven away. Promiscuous slaughter is therefore forbidden. Men must not kill more than they need."

Gonch gasped as the true meaning of this astounding utterance forced itself upon him. The motive that inspired it and its sound logic were too lofty for his understanding or appreciation. Had Gonch not been born hungry and hungered all his life, he might have understood, for his wits were as keen as those of a fox. But killing was his primary instinct. His every thought and act sprang from his unquenchable blood-lust. "Simple rules indeed and a simpleton who says them," he sneered under his breath. "This Pic has gone crazy with his flint-working. No wonder his people put him here by himself where he can do no harm."

But outwardly, Gonch appeared only an attentive listener. "Good," he said, "I understand. These are your hetman's orders."

"Yes, our hetman's orders."

"And this hetman, who is he?" asked Gonch.

"You will know him in good time," was the reply. "You will also learn that he is a man not to

be trifled with. And now for our third rule, an important one which you must be sure to remember. Of all animals, the Mammoth and Woolly Rhinoceros are absolutely immune. No man shall hunt, harm or annoy them in any way. The penalty is death."

This was too much. The Muskman laughed like a hyena in Pic's face. "Death no doubt," he sneered. "Those two animals can take good care of themselves. But you have forgotten one; there is a third."

"What?" demanded Pic, his eyes blazing.

"The Cave Lion. No fool would——" and then Gonch wished he could have swallowed his words before he said them, for the giant flint-worker's face fairly flamed with terrible rage. He thrust his great head forward and bared his teeth in the Muskman's face. He extended his right arm. Gonch felt the huge hand closing like a vise upon his wrist. An ounce more pressure would have meant crushed and broken bones. He cowered sick with terror as the threatening jaws opened wide as though to tear his throat.

"Meddler!" roared Pic. "Kill the Cave Lion if you can or let him kill you; either way, it would be good riddance; but the other two beasts are my friends—friends, do you hear? If you dare disobey my commands and harm one of them, I will tear you to pieces with my teeth and hands."

He released his grip upon the Muskman as he said this. His face relapsed into its former calm-

ness and the storm-wrath rolled away as quickly as it had come.

"You saved my boy," he said in a voice so gentle that Gonch stared at him amazed at the sudden change. "I am not ungrateful and will treat you as a friend, provided you do not break our rules. Be wise; observe them and all will be well. Enough; we now understand each other." With that he turned away and busied himself with the fire. So completely had his former tranquillity returned, that when the boy Kutnar who had been dozing all this time, awakened, his father and guest appeared on such good terms, he had not the slightest suspicion of anything unusual having happened while he slept.

V

PIC had become engrossed in his flint-lumps, so Gonch stretched himself out by the fire and gazed dreamily at the smoke-wreaths.

Gradually his eyes closed, his head pillowed itself upon his arm and he passed away into dream-land.

Gonch was sound asleep; but a hot coal fallen uncomfortably close to his foot, awakened him. As he opened his eyes, the first thing they met was the broad back of his host squatting by the fire. Kutnar had disappeared.

Pic scarcely moved. He sat with back slightly turned so that Gonch could see most of his left arm but not his right. Several large flint-flakes lay on the rock at his feet. Now he paused in his work to examine that which he held in his left hand, raising it so that Gonch could see. It was a flint-flake similar to those lying upon the rock. He wondered what Pic held in his other hand.

Click, click; Gonch heard the impact of something on flint. "The new method of weapon-making," dawned full upon him. "It would be well for me to know it." He raised himself upon one elbow and craned his neck to secure a better view. At the almost imperceptible sound he made, Pic

turned his head, whereupon Gonch settled back quickly and closed his eyes. Pic looked at him sharply for an instant, then resumed his work and again Gonch was straining to catch a glimpse of what his host was doing.

The big flint-worker held a small tool in his right hand. With this he was pecking at the flake held in his left. His arms were rigid; his hands barely moved; but the tiny flint chips flew like flakes of snow beneath the pressure of the retouching tool. Still supporting himself by one elbow, Gonch dragged himself closer. He was intent upon catching a glimpse of that which Pic held in his right hand, otherwise he would have noticed the flint-worker's left eye, now directed at the man who had changed his position by the fire and was playing the part of a spy. Pic coughed audibly and made much ado about rising to his feet whereupon the eavesdropper settled back quickly to his former recumbent position and breathed noisily like one sound asleep.

The giant flint-worker turned and stood over the sleeping man. His right hand was tightly clenched, concealing what might be within it. Gonch neither moved nor opened his eyes. Had he been—or rather appeared—wide awake, doubtless Pic would have greeted him with a smile. Mere curiosity is not an evil trait nor does it arouse mistrust. But this curiosity which dissembled, aroused Pic's misgivings. "Why—why did this man come here?" he asked himself as he gazed down

upon him whose sleep he knew was but a sham. His nostrils twitched as they caught a strange scent, the scent of the man-eater. His eyes stared at the recumbent figure. Nose and eyes gave answer: "Why did he come? Who knows? But we mistrust this trickster who so reeks with carrion. He will bear watching."

Pic turned away, whereupon Gonch yawned loudly, stretched his limbs and sat up, chuckling at his own cleverness. He was about to engage his host in renewed conversation when there sounded the scuffling of feet and the boy Kutnar came running up the causeway to the ledge. "Look below; they are coming," he shouted gleefully. He seized his father's hand and both hurried to the northern side of the Rock.

Far beneath them, scattered groups of animals were moving down the valley from the northeast. At sight of them, man and boy became greatly excited. They behaved like two children on circus day, watching the procession and commenting on the various animals as they filed slowly past.

"The Moose; he is early," muttered Pic. "That means a long cold winter. The Lynx; Agh, my good Stag and Roebuck, you must look to your fawns from now on."

A group of long-horned oxen, then a herd of bison followed with a pack of wolves skulking after them. A herd of horses passed and several hundred yards behind them, strode a gigantic deer, holding his head proudly erect beneath a ten-foot

spread of palmated antlers. It was the Irish Elk.

"A noble beast, the Skelg," said Pic. "Would that the valley had more like him. He must be spared by our hunters and encouraged to winter here. I will see to it."

More animals paraded by, many of them grazing as they went. A herd of reindeer appeared, walking briskly and tossing their scraggly antlers. At sight of them, the excitement of the two observers increased. Kutnar nudged his father and whispered, "See! the first of the Tundr-folk. The others will soon be here."

Pic made no answer; but his whole body trembled and his eyes were straining for a better view of two far-off moving specks. Gradually these latter resolved themselves into two animals, coming rapidly down the valley. No longer could father and son restrain themselves. They leaped and danced about the ledge like two lunatics, laughing and shouting: "Here they come; here they come!" clapping their hands and yelling themselves hoarse.

While all this commotion was going on, Gonch sat an amazed spectator, too bewildered to move. Father and son had forgotten him entirely. Gonch was glad of that, for two madmen were more than he cared to manage. He was collecting his wits together and preparing for a hasty retreat down the causeway when he saw Pic put both hands to his mouth like a funnel and heard him call at the top of his lungs: "Hairi! Wulli!"

Gonch sprang to his feet and peered down into

the valley. He saw two animals standing there with heads raised towards the two men high above them upon the ledge. The larger beast, an elephant, raised its trunk. A shrill trumpet squeal floated faintly to the Muskman's ears. Then followed another squeal of a different sort, probably uttered by the second and smaller animal, a rhinoceros.

At the sounds, Pic and Kutnar scrambled downward and disappeared. Gonch ran across the ledge and looked over. The two human figures were rapidly descending the cliffs, lowering their bodies from rock to rock by the combined use of their supple hands and feet. Kutnar was as agile and sure-footed as a chamois and Pic was not far behind him. So swift was their descent, that it seemed only a moment before they had reached the bottom and were dashing up the valley.

Gonch suddenly uttered an astonished yell. He rubbed the moisture from his eyes to make sure he saw what he thought he saw. Man and boy were charging upon the beasts at top speed. The latter sprang forward in their turn and bore down upon their unarmed assailants. This was indeed madness. In a moment, man and boy would be annihilated.

Gonch strained his eyes that they might miss nothing of the climax. Such madness was astounding but he meant to enjoy the sound of dying shrieks and the sight of crushed bodies while he had the chance.



"MAN AND BOY WERE CHARGING UPON THE BEASTS AT TOP SPEED"

“Agh-h!” he croaked delightedly as the four figures united in one mass. He heard squeals, bel-lows and much shouting, which from where he stood, sounded like the noise of battle. Finally the mass disintegrated into two parts; man and Mammoth composed one, boy and rhinoceros the other and each couple was standing peaceably side by side.

No blood; no dying shrieks; “Agh,” muttered Gonch a second time but in a far different tone. “The beasts are indeed his friends,” and he sank down weakly upon his haunches, wondering where man’s folly would end and what the whole world was coming to.

VI

GONCH acquired more experience of the Mammoth Man's peculiar whims, other than his friendship for the Hairy Mammoth and Woolly Rhinoceros. He gained this when he and Kutnar went down into the valley together and mingled with the Mousterian cave-men. The game laws or ban on needless slaughter of which Pic had spoken, Gonch had hitherto considered as the fancy of a disordered mind. Now to his astonishment, he found them not only a reality but scrupulously observed by one and all, although he saw no sign of the authority that enforced them. The Mousterians killed no more than sufficient for their wants and what they did kill was used to the best advantage. Nothing was wasted. The flesh served as food and the hides were set aside to be used as clothing during the cold season. Even the limb bones were split open for the juicy marrow they contained.

It was a strange community, this valley of the Vézère; too peaceful to suit Gonch. The cave-men themselves rarely fought or killed each other. Naturally this put a premium on human flesh, another drawback from the Muskman's point of view; and he blamed it all on the mad Mammoth

Man who should have attended strictly to his flint-working instead of imbuing the whole community with his crazy notions.

Gonch learned something more that surprised him and this concerned Kutnar. The latter spent most of his time with the men, an unusual proceeding, for boys were usually left with the women when the men went forth on hunting or other expeditions. Kutnar, however, seemed to enjoy special privileges. He was a strong, active lad, but a boy nevertheless and Gonch marvelled that men would tolerate his taking part in their affairs. It must be that as son of the master flint-worker, he was an extraordinarily privileged youth. Then, too, he went about unarmed; so it appeared, for he bore nothing but his pouch of pebbles and the rawhide thong wound about his waist. The hunters were walking across the meadow when a hare sprang up beneath their feet, bounded away several rods and then sat bolt upright. At a signal from the leader of the band, all stopped. The man beckoned to Kutnar. "Your turn now," and then as the boy came forward, all stood at attention, apparently much interested in what was about to happen.

While Gonch looked curiously on, wondering what new and strange spectacle was to be presented, Kutnar unwound the thong from his waist and held it dangling with the two ends in his right hand. Taking a pebble from his pouch he set it in the rawhide's hanging fold; then with a whispered "Stand clear" he whirled thong and pebble

several times about his shoulders and let fly. So swiftly sped the stone that no eye could follow it. Gonch could not observe that anything in particular had happened until one of the hunters ran forward and picked up the hare, no longer sitting upright but kicking its last upon the green meadow grass.

"A chance shot," thought Gonch who by this time had arrived at some understanding of this new method of stone-throwing. Nevertheless the sling was a novelty and the lad had displayed much skill in its use. Gonch went closer to examine it. Stones were usually hurled from the hand or by a throwing-stick, never from a strip of hide.

"Fling-string," he muttered scornfully. "It was a lucky cast. The stone might fly anywhere except to the mark meant for it."

But Gonch was mistaken. What Kutnar had done, he could do again, not once but many times. Half a dozen more hares and several rabbits fell before his unerring aim and then the hunters returned homeward with their bag, for the game-laws applied to all animals, small as well as large and what they or rather Kutnar had killed was sufficient for their immediate needs. On the way back, Gonch's opinion of Kutnar and his sling had undergone a profound change. It was a boy's weapon but one which a grown man could respect. The youth's skill with it was beyond the stretch of one's imagination. "The lad is a marvel," thought Gonch. "He has killed enough food for a

dozen men," and he had a wholesome respect after that, not only for the fling-string as he called it, but the arm and eye that could send the pebble so straight and swiftly to its mark.

But the most amazing thing of all, he was to discover when he found how intimate Kutnar was with the friendly Mammoth and Rhinoceros. He heard Kutnar one day jabbering away to the two, apparently in response to their squeals and grunts.

"Why do you make those noises?" asked Gonch.

"Wulli and Hairi don't know the man-language but I know theirs. My father taught it to me and we can understand each other perfectly," explained the boy.

The two animals were quite at home in the valley, for the Mousterian hunters left them severely alone. It was evident that men and beasts had arrived at some understanding. They were a strange pair, were the two beasts, grand surviving relics of an ancient order of things. The Mammoth was a giant nearly ten feet tall from sole to shoulder hump. He wore a long-haired overcoat underlain by closely packed wool. The Rhinoceros was similarly clad. In the matter of clothing they much resembled each other, also both of them were arctic animals, sometimes called Tundr-folk because of their homes in the bleak unforested tundras of northern Russia and Siberia.

Pic the Weapon Maker was usually to be found squatting upon the cave-threshold, making tools and weapons from the flint his people brought to

him. They also brought food and other necessities and received finished flint weapons in exchange. Gonch looked upon this manner of trading as a remarkable arrangement. He could almost see Pic sitting apart from the other men, on the threshold of Castillo, making and handing out superb blades while lines of hunters ascended the mountain side, all laden with freshly-killed game. Totan did not figure in this day dream, for he had been disposed of and Gonch himself had taken his place. It was a beautifully drawn picture, all woven about the Mousterian flint-worker but it contained one jarring note, which dream as he would, the Muskman could not obliterate. Pic in repose was an angel; aroused, a demon. That terrible face and the iron grip upon his wrist were things that Gonch could not forget, try as he would. "We can tie him up when he has his crazy fits," he thought and although this seemed a good way of remedying the difficulty, it did not drive away the dark cloud entirely.

Gonch saw much of Pic's weapon-making, but spy as he would, he could not catch him working with that little tool he had partially observed when lying by the fire during the occasion of his first visit to Moustier. Whenever his guest appeared, Pic put away his tool and worked entirely with the hammerstone, changing to ones of smaller size and less weight during the progress of the work from the hewn blank to the semi-finished flake. His skill with the stone-maul was uncanny. Gonch marvelled at the deft strokes, forever varying in

force and direction but each one striking just right to remove each chip from its place and properly shape the blade. But none of the weapons he saw made, ever quite reached the completed stage. Pic jealously guarded the retouching tool from Gonch's sight and scheme as the latter would, he could not catch a glimpse of it.

Gonch felt that he was losing rather than gaining ground with the Mammoth Man. He realized the importance of winning the latter's confidence and of being in a position to offer inducements before he could hope to arrange the long journey to the southland. And so he flattered his host, joked with him and painted pictures of Castillo in glowing colors; to all of which Pic would say: "If these things are so, why do you, a southron, leave them and come here?" or else he would hold his peace and appear more interested in his flint-hammering than in what the Muskman was descanting; and finally when he scowled and glared at his guest, Gonch knew it was time to take himself off.

It was after one of these parleys when he had gone down into the valley, with bitterness in his heart against all the world in general and the Mammoth Man in particular, that he scaled the cliffs to the plateau above in order to be alone and scheme anew. When he reached the upper level, he snarled angrily for the plateau was as flat and smooth as a board. Several hundred yards distant, a huge boulder rested at the very edge of the cliff, so Gonch went to that and sat down with his back to

it, safe from spying and interruption. It trembled as he touched it; a huge stone of many tons weight and yet it moved with the mere touch of his shoulders. It had been long since any man dared to go near this eerie boulder which rocked with the wind. Some said that a giant flesh-eating beast had long been sealed within it and that it struggled to escape when the wind blew. So they gave it a wide berth but Gonch, having neither seen nor heard of it before, considered it a mere rock. Here was a good place to seclude himself and so he crouched with his back to it and to the valley below him. He tried to think and plan but with his slightest motion, the boulder teetered from side to side. It was most disconcerting; the stone seemed bewitched. He scrambled to his feet and walked around it wondering how a mere rock could have gotten itself into such a peculiar predicament.

Nothing but an ordinary stone; of that he soon assured himself. It was so evenly balanced that he might tip it over and send it crashing down the cliffs if he chose. He was about to resume his former seat behind it when he heard sounds in the valley below. He poked his head over the cliff coping, then as quickly withdrew it to avoid being seen.

Two animals were plodding along the foot of the cliffs. Soon they would pass directly beneath the man crouching above their heads; also they would pass beneath the Tilting Stone.

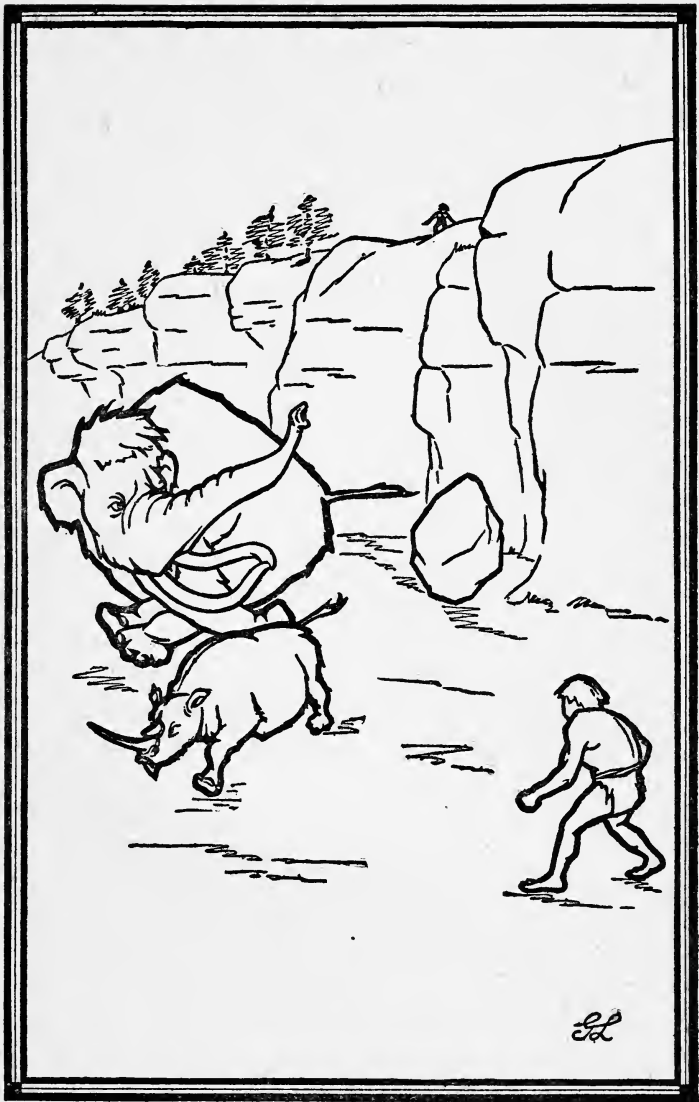
Gonch got upon his hands and knees growling

softly like a tiger awaiting its prey. He had recognized the two animals at a glance. They were the Mammoth and Woolly Rhinoceros. This was the chance of a lifetime. He a lone man might slay one or both beasts by the mere touch of his hand.

"There are none here to see," something within him said. "Who will deny that the rock simply fell? Who can say what caused it to fall? Be a man and vent your spite on this mad flint-worker." He growled softly once more, set his shoulders against the stone and waited.

The thumping of feet sounded almost beneath the Tilting Stone. Gonch listened intently, timing himself for the fateful moment. The beasts were walking fast as he could hear but it was not given him to know that the sounds took time travelling from the foot of the cliffs to where he crouched. The moment had arrived. He gave one mighty shove. The stone lost its balance—almost too slowly—then gathering momentum, went tumbling over the cliff. For an instant, Gonch stood outlined against the sky, then a shrill cry rang out below and he jumped back just as the boulder struck bottom with a tremendous crash. He heard squeals and bellows but he dared not look to see, for that voice—the cry of a human being, had terrified him. Away he bolted across the plateau and from the cliffs as fast as his legs would carry him.

Down in the valley, the boy Kutnar was running toward the fallen boulder, shouting "Hi—yo!" and waving his arms at the Mammoth and



THE FALL OF THE TILTING STONE

Rhinoceros who were galloping away in a great fright because of the falling stone that had crashed to the ground so closely behind them. They heard someone shouting and recognized Kutnar's voice, so they slowed up and looked back. All was now quiet and finally by much arm-waving, the lad induced his two friends to return. This they did very slowly and carefully, not feeling entirely convinced that all danger had passed. Kutnar was perched astride of the great boulder that had so nearly destroyed them. He spoke in the strange tongue that Hairi and Wulli so well knew.

"I saw it falling," he said as they came up. "I shouted to warn you."

The snorts, squeals and grunts with which the two animals answered would have meant nothing to an ordinary man; but Kutnar had no trouble understanding them.

"A narrow escape," sighed the Mammoth who was trembling from head to foot. "It is but a stone but it fell. What caused it to fall? It might have killed us."

"It would certainly have killed us, had it dropped upon our backs," said the Rhinoceros solemnly. "Never was I so startled. I nearly jumped over my nose-horn."

"And I, over my tusks," the Mammoth added.

Kutnar laughed. "Yes you both jumped like rabbits"; then he looked up at the cliffs and his face became serious. "The stone did not fall of itself,"

he said, half to himself. "Someone pushed it over. I saw——"

"Someone pushed it?" inquired the Mammoth. He looked thoughtfully at the great boulder and shivered. It had been a nerve-racking experience. He hoped he would never have another like it.

"Yes, someone pushed it," Kutnar repeated.

"Who?"

"I do not know. I saw him but an instant; then he jumped back."

"It must have been the Cave Lion," the Mammoth suggested. "He hates us and only a strong animal could have moved such a big rock."

"No, it was not the Cave Lion." Kutnar became silent as he watched the Rhinoceros who was now sniffing the stone vigorously. Finally Wulli's nose settled on one spot and here he made a most thorough investigation. When this was concluded to his satisfaction, he raised his head and gazed triumphantly, first at one then the other of his companions.

"I know," he squealed. "I found where he touched it. My nose never lies. I know."

"Who was it?" the Mammoth asked.

"A hyena."

"A hyena?" the boy laughed. "No, Wulli; you are wrong for once. Smell again."

The Rhinoceros took another long careful sniff. Once more he raised his head and maintained stubbornly: "My nose never lies, I tell you. I know

that smell of him who eats men and bad meat. I say it was a hyena."

For an instant the boy eyed his companion in doubt. Heretofore Wulli's nose had been infallible. It was his eyes versus the Rhino's nose. Probably the eyes were mistaken. They had caught only a fleeting glimpse. He laughed again. A second laugh echoed overhead. The three friends looked hastily upward and saw a hideous face leering down upon them. Quick as lightning, Kutnar made ready his sling and hurled a pebble. A loud yelp and the face disappeared. "Hyena it was," said the lad. "Wulli is right; his nose never lies, but had I not seen the beast a second time, I would have sworn that he who pushed the rock down upon us, was a man."

VII

GONCH fled across the plateau until he found a place where he could conceal himself and here he stayed until he judged that all danger of detection was past. Then he made a wide detour and proceeded to the Rock of Moustier, not from the valley side but across the heights, a route rarely or never taken by ones desiring to reach the grotto below.

As he halted at the cliff overlooking the cave-threshold, he caught sight of a man squatting far beneath him beside a fire. It was Pic engaged in weapon-making. His right arm did not rise and fall with each stroke of the hammerstone. He was devoting his efforts to the finer work, retouching flakes with the mysterious finishing tool. Gonch lay flat upon his chest and stomach and peered over the cliff. While so doing he was unconscious of the fact that he had dislodged several stone chips and caused them to fall.

Beneath him, the giant flint-worker still squatted motionless beside the fire but his ears were straining, his brain working rapidly as he sought the meaning of dust and limestone chips mysteriously descended upon him from above. The sun was warm. It was quite a natural gesture for him to

turn his head askew and downward at the same time and wipe the perspiration from it with his arm; also it enabled him to catch a glimpse of a man's head peering down upon him from the cliff.

Pic resumed his former position but now he was staring at his feet, his brows contracted in deep thought. For several minutes he maintained this attitude, then his brows lifted and he glanced at what he held in his hand. It was a ridiculously simple affair—a piece of bone not much larger than his forefinger, smooth, straight and notched at one end.

"Men have died for even less," he soliloquized. "I roamed the world over to find this piece of bone—the Terrace Man's finishing tool. Others may be doing the same. Yes that's it; I am sure of it now," and he scowled and gnashed his teeth in a way that would have horrified Gonch, had he been there to see.

For a time, Pic remained squatting motionless; finally he rose to his feet, piled more wood upon the fire and made other elaborate preparations as if for departure, shouldering his ax and gazing long and earnestly down the valley as though there were something there that required his attention. He gathered up his flint-flakes and took them to the cave and last of all, secreted the bone tool near the cliff wall beneath a flat stone. This latter maneuver was conducted mysteriously and with much deliberation. When all was arranged to his satis-

faction, he swung his ax over his right shoulder and descended the causeway to the valley below.

The ledge was now deserted. Gonch could see the master weapon maker sauntering leisurely down the causeway. He had also seen his host conceal something beneath a flat stone near the foot of the cliffs. It must be something valuable judging from the elaborate precautions taken to hide it from view. It might be the flint-worker's finishing tool. If so, this was an opportunity not to be missed.

The cliff-wall overlooking the ledge was too steep and smooth for a speedy descent, so Gonch sought the rougher and more sloping northeast side, the one opposite that which Pic was descending. This shut off his view of the latter and not until he reached the level of the cave-ledge, could he again obtain a glimpse of the causeway and anyone who might be near the cave. He saw no one. Pic had vanished and no doubt was making his way down the valley along the base of the Rock.

Feeling assured on this point and convinced that he was alone and safe from detection, Gonch crept towards the flat stone lying at the foot of the cliff wall, near the mouth of the cave.

His hand was now clutching the stone. Another second and the latter would have been raised disclosing what lay beneath, when a rustling sounded at the cave-mouth. Gonch turned quickly, then sank down upon the threshold in an agony of dread, for there stood Pic, filling the cave-mouth with his

great bulk and gazing down upon the Muskman with a look of withering scorn.

"I lost something, I—" stammered Gonch but the other cut him short.

"You lie," roared Pic, his face becoming rapidly convulsed with rage. "You lie and have lied ever since you came here. I know you now and why you came. To the muck with you and your filthy smell. Your whole body reeks with carrion. Your welcome is at an end, imposter. Begone."

"But—you mistake," protested the Muskman, summoning fresh courage on finding his life in no immediate danger. Pic's ire only increased. His face became that of a demon.

"You are alive now," he thundered. "Soon you will not be. Go at once. If you are found in the valley after the next sunrise, your friends the hyenas will be cracking your bones"; and Pic spat upon the cringing Muskman as he would have spat upon a snake.

Gonch crawled away along the ledge and down the causeway like a beaten hound, terrified but thankful enough that the giant's teeth and hands were not now tearing his throat. The farther he got away, however, the more comfortable he felt in body and mind, and by the time he reached the valley his courage had in a great measure returned.

He was safe—for the present—and having no immediate concern on that point, he began to consider and reflect bitterly upon the sudden miscarriage of his plans. Now he could no more think of



"THERE STOOD PIC"

persuading the master flint-worker to return with him than he could of compelling him to do so by force. The very thought of using force on Pic made him squirm. He might more easily overcome a lion.

As he walked down the valley, his thoughts turned to Totan and the men of Castillo. What would they say when he returned discredited and empty-handed? The big hetman was not one who dealt gently with vain boasters. Gonch could almost feel the hetman's club crashing down upon his pate. Pic here, Totan there; whether he stayed or went, it was all the same—a giant waiting to crush the life out of him. Gonch felt himself between the devil and the deep, blue sea.

Pic was a friend of animals and a lover of peace, but the prosperity and power that he had brought upon the cave-men of the Vézère was not to be denied. They were the strongest men, the most successful hunters in all the world, and all because of Pic, the genius that ruled over them. No one had said that the master flint-worker was hetman of the Mousterians, but Gonch knew it now, and he knew it without being told. He had failed miserably. Pic the Lion had snared Gonch the Fox with scarce an effort. To all appearances the former was but a flint-worker, skilled beyond belief and a physical giant to boot, but with the disposition of a child, peacefully inclined towards man and beast. A fool? hardly; even though Gonch hated him for not being one. His arm ruled over

the Vézère like the paw of a gigantic lion, its claws drawn into their sheath-pads, its powerful muscles hidden beneath their covering of heavy fur.

It was all just as had first been told to him in the southland. Gonch bit his lips until the blood came. Now he saw the truth of what he did not then believe from the lips of the man he himself had slain near the northern Cantabrian slopes. The Mousterian domain was the most powerful in all the world, and the arm that ruled over it, the mind that guided its destinies, were those of a simple flint-worker and weapon maker—Pic, the Mammoth Man.

VIII

WITH Pic's warning and fear of the giant weapon maker to spur him on, Gonch made haste to escape from the Mouserian country. He was hurrying to the southwest along the right bank of the Vézère River when suddenly a shrill scream sounded in the distance ahead of him. It was the cry of some animal in distress. A second and third cry rang out, closely following the first; then came piercing trumpet calls and loud bellows. Gonch sank upon his hands and knees and crawled through the grass in the direction of the cries. Soon he came upon him who made them and learned their cause. The Mammoth was bogged in a slough.

The huge beast had unwittingly trod upon the soft ground and was caught fast. This was one enemy that sapped his courage of its last drop, and now it held him in its death-grip. Maddened by his vain struggles, he had worked himself into a frenzy of terror; squealing, bellowing and thrashing his trunk about like a great flail.

The Muskman grinned with fiendish pleasure. He advanced to the quagmire and squatted comfortably at its edge. He felt perfectly safe and was only anxious lest he might miss any portion

of the grand and glorious scene. It was a small slough, and the terrified Mammoth stood so near firm ground that only a few steps were needed to bring him safely clear. He seemed to realize this, for he strained and tugged mightily to escape the mire that sucked him down, directing his efforts toward the pit-edge nearest him. One after another he pulled his feet from the slime, but only one at a time, and as fast as one was free the others sank deeper. The more he struggled, the more securely was he trapped. This was the way with all mired animals. Cave-men often used these made-to-order traps as aids in the capture of large game. Gonch had seen many a horse, bison or ox in a similar predicament, but never had it been his good fortune to come upon an elephant so caught.

"Pic's friend; so much the better," he sneered. At the sound of his voice the Mammoth became quiet. In his terror he had not before perceived the man squatting beside him. He squealed plaintively as much as to say: "Friends should ever help each other," and stood waiting, trembling and expectant. Gonch never moved, but grinned fiendishly at the great beast begging for assistance. He gathered a handful of dirt and threw it in the Mammoth's face.

The latter recoiled in surprise, then his ears flapped wildly and he bellowed loudly with rage. This change of sentiment helped him as nothing else could. He heaved and pulled, using his trunk

as a lever on the pit-edge, forgetting all fear in his eagerness to reach and chastise the man.

Gonch arose and retreated several steps to where several detached limestone blocks lay embedded in the soil. He secured one, the biggest he could lift, and returned to the Mammoth.

The latter must have known what was in store for him, for as Gonch hurled the stone at the base of his trunk the Mammoth suddenly ducked and received the blow upon his head-peak, a bony prominence reinforced within by air-cells and protected from without by a thick mop of shaggy hair. A painful bruise, but no real damage done. Gonch procured another stone and made ready to try again.

And then something swept down upon him with the weight and fury of an avalanche and sent him sprawling in the grass. As he lay helpless, wondering what had happened, he saw a rotund, short-legged animal bringing itself up short upon its haunches. Gonch trembled as the beast turned as though to make a second charge. However, to his great relief, the Rhinoceros paid no further attention to him, but devoted himself entirely to the Mammoth, walking along the margin of the morass and studying the situation his friend was in, with the utmost deliberation.

Gonch crawled away to hide himself behind a stone and watch.

It took the Woolly Rhinoceros several minutes to realize his friend's plight and to devise ways and

means for effecting a rescue. Having determined his course, he anchored his forefeet firmly and as close to the pit as he dared, then extended his head toward the Mammoth. The latter responded by raising his trunk and curling its flexible tip about the other's nose-horn, a formidable affair about two feet long, as smooth and glossy as polished steel. When assured that his partner had secured a firm grip, the Woolly Rhinoceros settled back his full weight, at the same time pushing hard with his legs.

The Mammoth's trunk tautened until it seemed about to break. His feet drew clear of the mire one by one, slowly but surely; and now that the Rhinoceros was relieving him of so much of his dead weight, he clung to that nose-horn with the persistence of one drowning. Even when his right forefoot touched solid ground, he did not release this hold. "Friends should ever help each other" might not be considered a slogan applicable to beasts, but Gonch saw it being applied now and in most marvelous fashion.

"I am asleep," he thought. "What I now see is but a dream." The Mammoth had by this time freed his front limbs and was resting with his feet and elbows on the pit-edge. Meanwhile the Rhinoceros maintained the tension on his partner's trunk, hanging on as determinedly as a bull-dog. Having rested, the Mammoth now concentrated every ounce of his strength for the final heave. The Rhinoceros, too, put on more power until his

friend's nose-spout stretched almost to the breaking point.

The Mammoth's hindquarters slowly emerged from the engulfing slime. The soft ooze slobbered and sighed as the rear pillar limbs drew clear, and the next moment both beasts stood shoulder to shoulder, stamping and snorting with rage.

They sniffed vigorously, but the wind told no tales, for it blew from them—the wrong way. Lucky Gonch! The time had not yet come for him to be impaled upon the horn of a rhinoceros or crushed beneath an elephant's ponderous feet. The breeze was his friend and the eyesight of his enemies was comparatively poor. He made himself as small as possible and lay motionless behind the stone, entirely unconscious that the grunts and squeals he heard were animal conversation.

"He must have gone away," said Wulli. "I can neither see nor smell him."

"To smell him is to know him," the Mammoth grumbled. "Never have I known a man to bear such an odor."

"It is that of a hyena," said the Rhinoceros.

"Let us find and punish him." The huge Elephant ground his teeth as he said this. Although slow to anger, he could neither forgive nor forget.

Gonch peered cautiously over the stone. The two beasts were walking away side by side.

"A happy ending to an unpleasant dream," he thought as he watched the pair disappearing behind rocks and trees. He raised himself into a crouching



"FRIENDS SHOULD EVER HELP EACH OTHER"

position just as a big-eared head arose with him from the grass, about ten paces distant. It was a maneless head with repulsive features and slopping jaws. It grinned horribly at the man, and yet made no move to attack him. "One would think the beast my friend," thought Gonch as he stood erect with ax held ready to defend himself.

"A hyena, but never have I seen such a big one. The Mammoth has cheated us both," he said aloud to the beast. "We must wait and hope for the chance that may come again."

The Hyena licked his muzzle and leered at the man, then turned and walked slowly away. A sloping back and bushy tail trailed behind the huge head. Such trust in human nature was astounding. The Muskman might have glided stealthily after and slain the brute before it could turn and defend itself. He was standing motionless, watching the gray back melt away in the meadow grass, when he heard sounds in the opposite direction. The bushes waved and crackled, and he made out a human form coming through them and rapidly toward him.

Gonch dropped flat in the grass and lay still. The crackling sounds and he who made them came nearer. The Muskman could now see his face. He breathed a deep sigh of relief. In a moment he was on his feet and advancing to meet the newcomer. It was the boy Kutnar.

IX

AT sight of the approaching Muskman, Kutnar shouted a glad "Hi-yo!" and ran forward to meet him.

"You are too young to be traveling about alone," said Gonch when the pair came together.

The boy pouted. "Do not worry. I can take care of myself." He now bore an ax in addition to the sling and stone-pouch which he always carried. "I have not been alone long," he added. "Wulli was with me. He strayed off somewhere, and I was just looking for him."

"Wulli?"

"Yes, the Woolly Rhinoceros. That is the name we know him by. The Mammoth is Hairi."

"They both passed me some time ago," said the Muskman. "They were strolling side by side up the valley." For obvious reasons he made no mention of the slough and what had occurred there. The part he had played had best be known to nobody but himself.

"Good," said the boy, much relieved. "I heard squeals and thought that one of them might be in trouble."

"No trouble at all," Gonch assured him. "They

seemed quite happy and contented as they went away together. Strange why they should choose each other for companions. Are the two such good friends?"

"The best of friends," Kutnar replied. "They would fight and die for each other. Any man or beast who attacks one of them has to fight both. It was the Mammoth who first said, 'Friends should ever help each other.' He says it and does it, too; so does the Rhinoceros."

"Ugh!" Gonch began to feel hot and uncomfortable. It had suddenly occurred to him that Pic would soon learn from his friend the Mammoth of what had happened in the slough. He would not forget to tell of the man who had attacked him when he was unable to defend himself. Soon the whole valley would be in an uproar. Gonch shuddered as he thought of what Pic would do to him, if ever he was caught.

"Your father is much interested in the Hairy Elephant," said Gonch. "I understand that he permits no one to hunt him. Would the latter go to him if any man were bold enough to harm the beast?"

"Perhaps; perhaps not," replied the youth. "He and Wulli are sometimes queer about such matters. Like as not they would keep quiet and punish the offender themselves. Wulli in particular is inclined that way. However, you never can tell. Only this morning a rock, the Tilting Stone, fell from the

cliff and barely missed destroying both animals. I doubt if my father yet knows of this."

"And there would be only the rock to punish if he did know of it," said Gonch.

"Also him who pushed it down," the boy added.

"How?" the Muskman was in a cold sweat. "Who pushed it down?"

"A hyena," the lad replied. "At first I thought it was a man."

Gonch gasped and wiped his forehead. "No, your father does not know of this. I was with him on the Rock only a short time ago, and he made no mention of it. Your father and I have grown to be very fond of one another. Only this morning he was showing me how he made his flints."

"How he finished them?" asked the lad in surprise.

"Yes, with the little tool. Do you know how it is done?"

"Of course, I do," was the answer. "My father says that I am to become a weapon maker, and so he has taught me how to do the work. Some day I will do as well as he, so he says."

"Um-m!" The Muskman's eyes sparkled with a strange light. He had failed miserably and was a fugitive from Pic's wrath, but now—the possibilities were unlimited. He might escape and succeed both.

"Wonderful boy," he muttered. "And so you can make the fine blades with the little finishing tool. How surprising. And now I am about to

tell you something. If you were not as good a friend of mine as I am yours, I could not bring myself to say it."

"Agh, but I am your good friend," Kutnar answered quickly. "You should tell me everything."

"And you will not repeat what I say?" Gonch asked. "Your father and I must be very careful. Some one might hear of it."

"Hear of what?" the boy inquired, now beside himself with curiosity. "I will be silent. Tell me."

Gonch glanced about him. "Sh!" he said, lowering his voice and assuming an air of deep mystery. "We southrons have a new and better way of finishing the flints."

"A better way?" the boy stared. "Impossible."

"No, it is true," Gonch declared impressively. "Your father agrees with me that our method is the best. I am to get it and bring it to him."

"Get what?"

"The new finishing tool; cannot you understand?" the Muskman grumbled. "You see, I am grateful because you and your father have been very good to me. I am to live the rest of my life here, helping with the weapon-making. And now I must hurry away to get the finishing tool—the wonderful tool that we make our fine blades with. I will be so lonely, going away without you. That will hasten my return." He embraced the boy and lingered over him. His whole manner was charged with a pathos that astonished even himself; but his

affairs were nearing a crisis and the present occasion called for the best he had in him. Then as he hesitated with his heart-breaking farewell, hoping and praying for the fulfillment of his wishes, his heart suddenly sank. Kutnar's nostrils had caught the offensive beast odor. He detached himself from the other's arms and turned away his head.

"Is my best friend offended by the smell of my panther and hyena killing?" Gonch asked in a hurt voice. "Perhaps I did but a poor service when once I saved you from death."

On being thus reminded of his debt, Kutnar experienced a wave of remorse. He clung tightly to his friend and buried his face in his chest. "Agh, you did well," he whispered earnestly. "What you have done for me makes the odor sweet. I will not have you leave me alone. We will go together."

"Would that it were possible. I would be so happy with you as my companion. But, you see, I must hurry. I cannot wait while you prepare yourself for the journey."

The boy looked scornfully at the Muskman's equipment, which consisted of nothing but an ax. "I am as much prepared as you are," he said. "We can both go at once."

Gonch yielded with seeming reluctance, and so they hurried off together, Gonch chatting and pointing out various things of interest, to divert the lad's mind and prevent its turning too strongly

to home and friends. However, Kutnar needed no encouragement. This was his first long trip away from home, but the thought of new adventures and things to see filled him with delight and anticipation. Deep down within his heart was a subdued feeling that he was playing the part of truant and that his father and friends might not like his sudden leave-taking. But he had a good friend with him, and his father would soon understand that the two of them had gone away together, also why and where they had gone. He wished that he might at least say good-by to the Mammoth and Rhinoceros; but there was no time to do this or to see any one, so he put these matters out of his mind and went his way.

The two traveled the balance of that day and far into the night, for Gonch confided that he was anxious to reach his destination and return before the cold weather set in. After a short rest, they were up with the sun and away again.

Gonch was really anxious to get a good, long start; also he feared that already he was being pursued. He had observed two animals—a large and a smaller one—trailing far in his rear and suspected them to be the Mammoth and Rhinoceros.

To throw them off the track, when he and Kutnar came to a river, instead of swimming directly across, they waded down stream for some distance, then landed and resumed the original direction of their journey.

If the Mammoth and Rhinoceros were really fol-

lowing, this ruse must have succeeded; for although Gonch kept a sharp eye on his line of retreat, he saw no more sign of pursuers. All fear of Pic and his friends now vanished, and his thoughts turned to the southland and the Cavern of Castillo.

X

THE next morning found Pic squatting beside his fire before the grotto of Moustier. He was engaged in his usual occupation—weapon-making. It had been over twenty-four hours since he last saw Kutnar, but this gave him no particular cause for worry. The boy went to and fro, spending as much of his time in the valley as he did upon the Rock. He had been known to have absented himself from home several days at a time. "I was even more restless than he at his age," chuckled Pic. "Probably he is off on some lark," and so he went on with his flint-working. His entire day was spent alone and the night, too. Nothing to worry about seriously, but when morning came and the boy was still absent, Pic began to feel not altogether at his ease.

He endeavored to resume his work, but, finding that he was striking the flint-flakes everywhere but the right place, he put aside his hammerstone and armed with a flint-ax, descended into the valley.

Here he was met by a party of Mousterian hunters. All welcomed him and showed no small surprise, for rarely did he take part in their activities unless something unusual was afoot. To his question, "The boy Kutnar; where is he?" none could give a satisfactory reply.

"He may have gone somewhere with the Mammoth and Rhinoceros," one of the hunters suggested.

"Yes, the three of them must be together," Pic agreed. "The boy is perfectly safe in the company of two such powerful animals," and, feeling much comforted, he returned to the Rock and resumed his work. And yet, although inwardly rebuking himself for his needless concern, many times that day he put aside his hammerstone and gazed up and down the valley. When night came he retired later than was his custom, and his rest was broken by many wakeful moments, at which times he would arise and seek the cave-threshold, hoping that the boy had returned. Vain hope, for when morning broke, Kutnar was still absent.

Pic strode to and fro upon the ledge, turning his head this way and that like a caged lion. From his elevated position he could see up and down the valley for many miles. The Mammoth, at least, could be seen if he were anywhere near; but, strain his eyes as he would, Pic caught not a single glimpse of the huge and familiar figure. He did no work that morning, for his anxiety had greatly increased, and he made no further effort to conceal it. "I fear that something is wrong," he said. "Otherwise Kutnar would have returned long before this."

Once more he descended to the valley and sought news from his men, but there was none to be had, and his worry thereby increased. The cave-men

were beginning to gather about by twos and threes, for word had already passed that their chieftain was greatly concerned because of his son's continued absence. Soon a crowd of them had assembled, but not one man had any information worth giving.

"He might be with the stranger," suggested itself to Pic. "The two have been much together." This thought both angered and alarmed him. He scowled as he asked, "Has any one seen Gonch?"

Nobody had seen him for several days. When last observed he was alone and on his way somewhere down the valley.

"The bird has flown," thought Pic much relieved. "For a moment I thought—but no, the skulker would not have dared. He values his life too highly;" but even though his fears as to Gonch were quieted, he felt it time to set the machinery in motion for a systematic search.

The cave-men were divided into squads, which scattered in all directions, up, down and across the valley, examining every nook and corner as they went. Pic at the head of one of the squads hurried southwestward along the river bank. Before dividing his men, he said: "The man Gonch is a traitor. If you come upon him, kill him," whereat all stared in surprise, but hastened to do as bidden without asking questions.

Pic and his band hurried downstream along the right bank of the Vézère. The giant flint-worker led the way, running in and out among the rocks

and bushes like a hound following a trail. He held his ax in readiness to strike down man or beast as he led the way fearlessly past ledge and thicket, from which hidden enemies might have sprung upon him. His voice thundered commands, and all hastened to obey. The cave-men were amazed by his fierce energy. He was a being transformed; this strange man, of whom it had been said that he would neither hunt nor fight. They reached the confluence of the Vézère and Dordogne rivers. Suddenly Pic uttered a loud shout as two shaggy heads rose above the river bank. The Mammoth and Rhinoceros were emerging from the water after a swim from the opposite bank. They presented a woe-begone and exhausted appearance, as though their entire night had been spent in traveling without food and rest.

As Pic ran forward to meet them, his followers halted at a respectful distance. The two animals shook the river water out of their coats and then told their story.

The Hyena Man, meaning Gonch, had fled, taking Kutnar with him. He had a peculiar and unpleasant odor, which was fortunate, for it had enabled them to follow his trail without much trouble. His scent was so strong that they could not understand how they had lost it, but anyhow, after crossing a river, they had been unable to find it again. A mean trick had been played upon them, they were positive, but, not knowing just what to do next, they had returned for assistance. Both

were agreed that the Hyena Man could no longer be trusted. He had tried to kill the Mammoth when the latter was caught fast in the mud. The big elephant had a bump on his forehead to show for it. He felt much aggrieved at such treatment and intended to trample the Hyena Man to death if ever he caught him, but the wretch had escaped, and, to make matters worse, he had taken Kutnar along with him.

That was all, but quite enough. Pic was furious. He raged like a mad bull. The cave-men crowded about him, shouting and brandishing their weapons. But raging and shouting led to nothing; Pic soon realized that much. Gonch had several days' start; also he knew just where he was going, which the others did not. He had anticipated pursuit by performing the well-known water trick, thereby throwing the Mammoth and Rhinoceros off his track. Pic became deadly calm. His men were of no use to him now. He could kill Gonch without any one's assistance, but the trouble was to catch him. Speed was what he desired most. Without it, he could never hope to overtake his enemy. Every moment of delay now counted against him. He raised his hands in despair to the Mammoth. "Friends should ever help each other," he groaned in beast jargon. "Would that I were a bird to fly or a deer to speed over the meadows like the rushing wind. How can I hope to overtake the traitor and save my boy?"

As if in reply, the Mammoth raised his foreleg



"YOU MUST STAY BEHIND"

and stood at attention. Pic's despair changed to amazement, then understanding. Like a flash, he sprang upon the beast's uplifted limb and seized his ear. A moment later and he was up and astride the great shaggy neck, sitting comfortably in the depression between head and shoulder. The cave-men waved their axes and shouted themselves hoarse: "Kill, kill! Death to the traitor!" and then Pic raised his hand. All became quiet, listening to their leader's final instructions.

"You," he said, pointing to a young giant seamed with battle-scars; "you must command here, and death to him who disobeys you. I may be gone many days. He who makes trouble in my absence will be food for the hyenas when I return. Good-luck to you and farewell. I will not come back without the boy."

"Long live the Mammoth Man; death to Gonch," howled the cave-men, waving their axes on high. Obedient to a hand-pat from his rider, the Mammoth wheeled and made for the river. Pic heard footsteps behind him. He looked back and frowned as he saw the Woolly Rhinoceros following closely on his partner's heels.

"Not this time, good old friend," he said. "You are too slow and will only delay us. You must stay behind."

Wulli stopped short. The words rang in his ears like the sound of his own doom; but Pic had said them. He stopped obediently and stood, head cocked on one side, a prey to his ponderous reflec-

tions. The Mammoth had by this time entered the water, and still the Rhinoceros remained immovable watching the unsubmerged portion of his friend sailing rapidly across the stream.

So intent was he, so intent were the cave-men upon Pic and the Mammoth's departure, that none perceived a spectre in the background slinking leisurely away. It was a big-eared beast with ghoul-grinning face and slopping jaws. It had been an interested witness of all that had passed, but none had seen or heard the foul beast of ill-omen, Crocut the Bone-breaker and giant leader of the Cave Hyenas.

XI

GRUN WAUGH the Cave Lion reclined comfortably upon his side, beneath the lofty rock-shelter of Mawdlin—an overhanging cliff close to the right bank of the Vézère River. A few paces distant sat Scrag, his half-grown son. The latter was in the midst of his morning paw-scrub, a self-inflicted process indulged in by all members of the cat family and vulgarly known as “spit-wash.”

Scrag had spent the night in some wild orgy and had but recently returned home in the gray morning hours to where his parent awaited him. Judging from his appearance, he had experienced a lively time of it. His right eye was bunged and gashed so that he was obliged to depend entirely upon his left. One ear was torn and bleeding; it seemed to have been chewed. Father and son were conversing in low growls. At the moment Scrag had the floor and was recounting the details of his night's adventures.

“I was hiding in the grass; lying low, chest and stomach to the ground, just as you have always told me to do. I cannot account for it, but he must have seen me.”

“How about your tail?” his sire remarked

gruffly. "No doubt, that was waving in the air so that even a mole could see it."

"Possibly," Scrag admitted, slightly elevating the brows crowning his one good eye. "I may have been a trifle careless as to tail. I never thought about it. Well, anyhow, just as he passed me, I jumped."

"And missed, I presume," the Cave Lion grumbled with an I-suppose-I'll-have-to-pay-the-bill air.

"Not exactly," chuckled the other, applying himself diligently to his toilet. "True, I missed what I jumped at"—souse, souse—"but I did"—swish, swish—"hit something."

"What?" Grun Waugh snorted impatiently.

"A rock," snickered Scrag, all set and ready to run. "I struck it head-on and bumped my eye. For an instant I was half-stunned; but luckily for me I had senses enough left to remember something else you used to tell me."

"What?" roared Grun Waugh.

"That I had four good legs and knew how to use them. Did I use them? I most certainly did. You would have been proud of your little Scraggy had you been there to see."

"Whelp!" thundered the Cave Lion. "Never will I hear the last of this. You, son of the grandest and boldest among flesh-eaters, fled from——"

"The Woolly Rhinoceros," leered Scrag, screwing up his face. He stroked his chin bristles with his forepaw and looked thoughtfully at Grun

Waugh as he added mischievously: "Now, who was it taught me to do that?"

The Cave Lion said nothing, but he was choking with suppressed rage, and his tail squirmed like a snake on a hot griddle. There were but two animals in the world that he had been known to run from, and the Woolly Rhinoceros was one of them.

He was brooding angrily over the matter and endeavoring to formulate some plausible excuse, when a burly figure suddenly thrust itself between him and the light. He looked up quickly and saw standing before him Crocut, his henchman and giant leader of the Hyena Pack.

Crocut settled down upon his haunches and grinned, first at Grun Waugh, then at Scrag. He always grinned and meant nothing in particular by it, for his face was simply built that way. It may be that, as head undertaker of the Vézère valley, it was his place to appear cheerful at all times, and because of that he either grinned or laughed. His grin was a death-mask and his laugh a voice from the grave.

Grun Waugh and Crocut had formed a partnership and were engaged in the meat business—wholesale and retail. Crocut selected the live-stock and Grun Waugh did the killing or dangerous work. He received the freshest and choicest cuts as his share, after which Crocut cleared away the remains and disposed of the by-products. The giant Hyena employed members of his own family as scavengers for this latter purpose. It was also one of his im-

portant duties to develop new business, and so he wandered about continually, searching for occasional horse, ox, bison or other animal that might have strayed from its herd and could be attacked to advantage. It then remained for him to convey such information to his royal master the Cave Lion. Crocut had scruples and conscientiously refrained from intruding upon the executive or killing end of the business. This was Grun Waugh's prerogative. The two got along finely by thus working in perfect harmony.

The leader of the Hyena Pack brought news, otherwise he would not have come. "I have much to tell you," he began. "First, I will speak of the Woolly Rhinoceros."

Grun Waugh scowled and wrinkled his muzzle. Again that name; but, although at first greatly vexed, he listened attentively as Crocut told of a man who had pushed a big rock over the cliff. This rock had barely missed crushing the Rhinoceros, also the Mammoth, who was with him. Crocut had seen this with his own eyes.

"Escaped; always escaped," growled the Cave Lion. "Had either the Rhinoceros or Mammoth been killed, it would have been different; but as it is, the tale annoys me."

"I, too, have suffered in order that my lord might learn all," whined the Hyena. "The Trog-boy was with the two animals. He threw a stone at me and bruised my jaw. It is so sore that for several days I have been unable to crack even the smallest bone."

Crocut grit his teeth, then winced with the pain which even this slight pressure caused him; then discovering that he was arousing no sympathy, he resumed: "Irritating, indeed; but please remember that it was a man who so nearly slew the Mammoth and Rhinoceros. Heretofore, none of the Trog-folk have dared attack the two animals."

"Hagh!" Grun Waugh pricked up his ears. The tale now presented features of interest. "Not bad," he said to Scrag, but the latter was already past hearing. He had curled himself up into a ball and was sound asleep.

"I have taken much interest in this man," Crocut went on. "He has the odor of a hyena, and yet he appears to be a man. Possibly he is a relative; surely a friend. In addition to the first episode, he a second time attacked the Mammoth."

Grun Waugh was now sitting up, his features expressing rapt attention. The moment of silence was broken by only Scrag's resonant snores. Crocut described the scene at the slough and the Mammoth's narrow escape. It was exasperating to think that the huge elephant had gotten off scot-free, and yet the narrative had its brighter side—the man's share in it. He had done his part well, and the failure was no fault of his. Grun Waugh was beginning to feel kindly toward this Hyena Man. He purred softly and stretched his claws. Scrag snored peacefully on.

"I have not yet told all," the giant bone-breaker resumed. "The Hyena Man—our friend, if I may



LL

THE LEADER OF THE CAVE HYENAS BRINGS NEWS

be so bold to say it—is now doing even better. Already he has set upon the Ape Man.”

Grun Waugh licked his flewed lips as though anticipating a feast. His purring became a gargle. He gave an attentive ear to the balance of Crocut’s thrilling account to the accompaniment of Scrag’s nose-racking snores. The Ape Man meant Pic. All flesh-eaters called him that and hated him most cordially into the bargain. Grun Waugh hated him worst of all, for it was whispered among beasts that this Ape Man, when a boy, had dethroned their royal monarch, the Lion. None dared speak such words aloud, but it was no secret that the puny Trog-boy had once driven Grun Waugh from the Grotto of Moustier and, having taken possession, had successfully resisted repeated attempts to dislodge him. It was only fair to explain that this same Trog-boy had not acted in an entirely honorable manner. He had employed fire as his chief means of defense, and, of course, fire was a thing that no beast, however brave and strong, could contend with.

Crocut explained that the stranger had not attacked the Ape Man directly, but it would seem that he had done even better. He had robbed him of his whelp and was now fleeing southward. The whole valley was in an uproar over the matter. Already the Ape Man had hurried off in pursuit, riding upon his friend the Mammoth. If they caught the Hyena Man, it would go hard with him. It was unfortunate and Crocut wished that the

fugitive might in some way elude his pursuers, but the Mammoth was swift of foot, and there was no telling what might happen.

Grun Waugh leaped to his feet and gave vent to a thunderous roar. "And so the Mammoth and Ape Man are pursuing the Hyena Man," he said fiercely. "Meddlers! We will follow and chastise them for interfering."

Crocut wilted. He hung his head and looked about him as though seeking an avenue of escape. It began to look as though there might be some fighting, and, of course, he wanted to keep clear of that. "In your absence, I——" he began, and then held his peace, for Grun Waugh's cold green eyes were directed full upon him.

"You will go with us, of course," said the Cave Lion, biting his moustache and thereby displaying his huge canine teeth. "You began this, and now you must see it through. Come, Scrag."

The prodigal son yawned and stretched his limbs; then with a wry face stood erect and wiped the sleep from his one good eye. Crocut groaned inwardly. Although a bone-breaker of the first order, he aimed at all times to be numbered among the spectators whenever there was fighting to be done. However, the Cave Lion had spoken, and there seemed no way out of it. And so, under his guidance, the three hurried down the river bank to the Dordogne, where they picked up the Mammoth's trail and followed it across the stream to the south-land beyond.

XII

GONCH was in high fettle. He no longer feared pursuit and figured that already the race was as good as won. His enthusiasm was contagious. Kutnar caught it, and what with his thought of journeying to an unknown land, he was thrilled to his very soul. He was having a wonderful time; so many adventures and new things to see and all because of his good friend Gonch.

The two runaways swam across a stream south of the Dordogne River and found the water so icy that when they reached the opposite side at first they could not climb the bank. They danced and thrashed their arms about to restore the blood circulation in their numbed bodies and were finally able to move on. As for Gonch, now that he had no real troubles to worry him, he was having a very enjoyable trip homeward. The boy was an excellent companion. Never had Gonch so enjoyed himself.

Then came the fly in his ointment. The two were making their way across the lowlands to the Midouze River. The Muskman occasionally glanced behind, more from force of habit than as a measure of precaution, but finally he saw something

on the distant horizon that made his heart jump almost into his mouth. It appeared no larger than a speck, but it was a living thing, for Gonch saw it move and knew it to be a large animal by comparison with the rocks and trees about it. Only one beast was of such size.

Gonch had a most uncomfortable feeling that the Mammoth was pursuing him because of that unfortunate episode by the slough. He would have given much to erase that mad scrape and still possess the great beast's good will. But it was too late for wishing things that were not. The Mammoth, once foiled, had set himself right somehow and was not far behind.

He and Kutnar were nearing a grove which bordered the Midouze. The approaching cold season had entirely defoliated it, but the closely growing timber and underwood offered chance of concealment. Before plunging into the tangled mass of tree-trunks, brush and vines, Gonch took another look behind him. The distant speck had grown much larger. It presented a full-length view. Gonch could have sworn that it carried something upon its back.

"Does the Mammoth ever wander about alone?" he asked of the boy.

"Never that I know of," was the answer. "Wulli is always with him."

"On the Mammoth's back?" Gonch pretended to be joking.

"No, indeed," Kutnar laughed. "None but my

father ever sat astride him. Hairi would never permit any other to do such a thing."

"Your father? Ugh." Gonch felt the humor all knocked out of him.

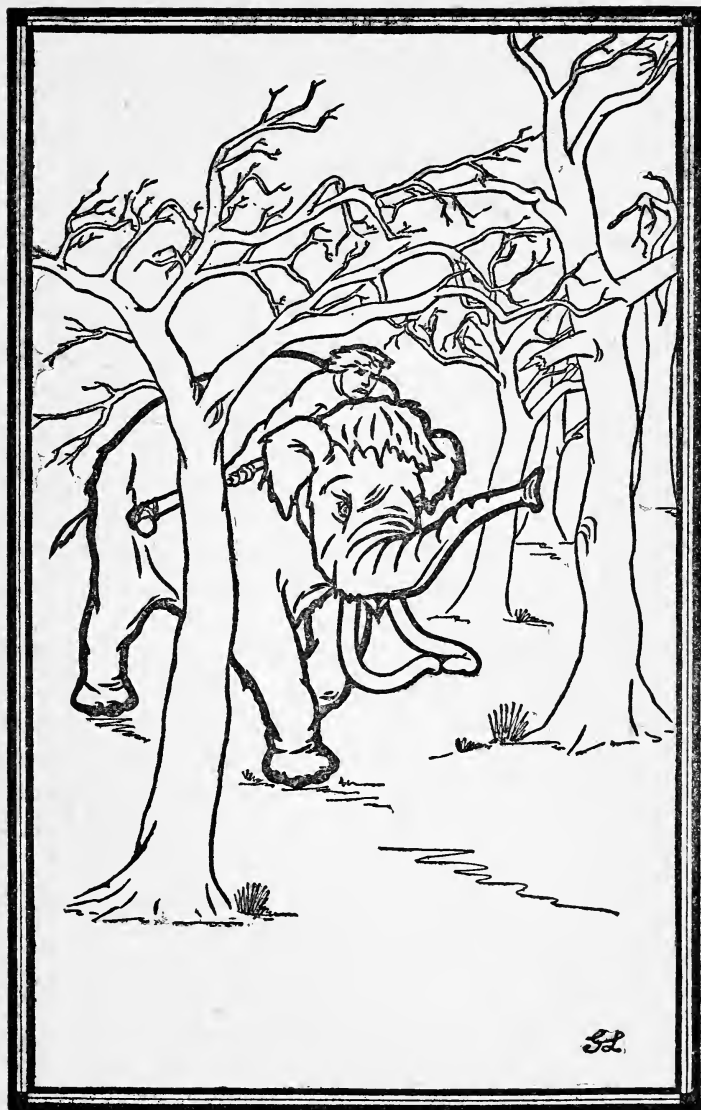
"Yes, he rides the Mammoth when he wishes to go far and fast. Hairi appears slow and clumsy, but none but a swift-footed animal can keep up with him. Why? What made you think of him?"

"Um, nothing," replied Gonch, quickening his pace. His fun was now thoroughly spoiled.

He now understood why the big elephant had been able to pick up the trail once more. A man had helped him—a man familiar with human trickery. Gonch's position was rapidly becoming a desperate one. The Mammoth's speed, combined with his rider's intelligence, would soon bring the chase to an end.

Gonch and Kutnar hurried through the woods and arrived at the river bank. The former waded into the water with the latter close behind him. The lad was preparing to swim across when Gonch whispered, "Not that way," and waded upstream as fast as he could. The two had progressed fifty yards or more when Gonch stopped at the sound of a violent commotion among the trees. His pursuers were almost upon him. Beckoning Kutnar to follow, he waded back to the bank, climbed up and dashed into the woods. Again sounded the snapping of branches and brush trodden under foot. Man and boy dropped flat to earth and lay still.

Peering above the grass and brush which con-



THE PURSUIT

cealed him, Gonch could see dimly and afar between trees, the form of a great beast smashing its way through the forest. His blood chilled at the sight and then became ice as he caught a momentary glimpse of a man's face high above the trunk and tusks of a gigantic elephant. He turned to the lad beside him. Kutnar had not yet seen, nor must he see. Crash! the flat blade of the Muskmán's flint-ax descended upon the boy's skull. Kutnar stiffened and lay as still as a log.

The noise in the forest had by this time become a cyclonic fury of breaking tree trunks and snapping branches. A voice which sounded in Gonch's ears like that of an avenging fiend, jabbered and shouted hideously in a language he could not understand. He raised his head just high enough to see as the hurricane swept past him, a huge elephant tearing along with great swinging strides and using his head as a battering-ram, while a man of herculean build sitting astride his neck and clinging tightly to avoid being swept from his seat by the tossing branches, urged the beast forward as with whip and spur. It was Pic and the Mammoth. Gonch felt so terrified at sight of them that he burrowed his face in the dirt and cowered there, wishing he had never been born.

As the Mammoth reached the river bank, he checked his onward rush so abruptly that had not his rider been holding on tightly he would have been pitched over the beast's head. At a shout from Pic, Hairi ransacked the ground carefully

with his trunk-tip. Now that they were near the water, some trickery was to be expected. However, the Mammoth found the trail fresh and warm. It led straight to the river, and so he splashed in.

Gonch waited until he heard the beast settling into deep water; then raised himself on his elbows and watched. The Mammoth climbed the opposite bank and began a careful search for the trail. Pic, who 'had been noting his steed's every motion, pointed to the bank downstream. Evidently he suspected that the Muskman was once more essaying the old water trick. He shouted a command, the Mammoth wheeled, and the two of them disappeared.

Gonch turned his attention to the boy, who lay as one dead. He raised him by the shoulders and turned him over upon his back. The boy's eyes were closed. Blood trickled from his nose and mouth; but he still lived. Gradually his breathing grew stronger and he opened his eyes. He saw his good friend bending over him.

"Where am I?" he asked. "My head—the pain," and the Muskman answered softly. "With your good Gonch, who drove away the beast that tried to kill you."

"The beast?"

"Yes, a lion, the largest I have ever seen. He leaped through the trees and struck you down. Would that I had received the blow instead of you; but I did the best I could. The beast attacked me, and I drove it away."

Kutnar was still indisposed, and so Gonch raised him in his arms and bore him away. To do this, he was obliged to carry his ax in his jaws, holding the handle between his clenched teeth. Not thinking of nor seeing the boy's ax, he left it lying where it had fallen. Still holding Kutnar in his arms, he marched to the river and waded through the shallow water for a long distance. Finally, he went ashore and entered the woods. Here he laid down his burden and threw himself full length beside it, so that each might feel the other's warmth. In this manner they passed the night undisturbed. Both rested well, and when morning came Kutnar felt sufficiently recovered to be up and on his way once more.

Gonch was careful not to cross the river, following the right bank instead until they were within sight of the seacoast. Then they crossed the river and ascended the elevations marking the western end of the Pyrenees. From there they deviated westward and entered upon the last leg of their journey along the northern flank of the Cantabrian mountain chain. This last leg was, however, not the least, for by this time winter was in full blast, bringing ice and snow with it and bitter north winds sweeping down upon the exposed country lying between the Pyrenees mountains and the Cavern of Castillo.

XIII

THE Woolly Rhinoceros was left standing on the right bank of the Dordogne River watching Pic and the Mammoth disappear.

He had been ordered to remain behind, simply because, through no fault of his own, he lacked one cardinal virtue—speed.

But Wulli was not bewailing his speed, or rather his lack of it. The subject never entered his head. He was trying to grasp the idea that for the first time in his long and adventurous career the Mammoth had gone away and left him alone. As friends they had always been inseparable. It seemed incredible that anything could cleave their bond asunder. What was one without the other? Wulli had never imagined the possibility of separation. It had always been “we”; now it was “I.” He bowed his head, stunned, crushed as the terrible reality dawned upon him—he had been left alone.

This was Thought Number One. His brain, being an unpretentious affair, gave room for only a single idea at one time. No one can blame him for that. Some space had to be sacrificed for nose-horn, bumps and everything. Unquestionably he could have thought as hard and fast as anybody had he the gray matter to do it with. However,

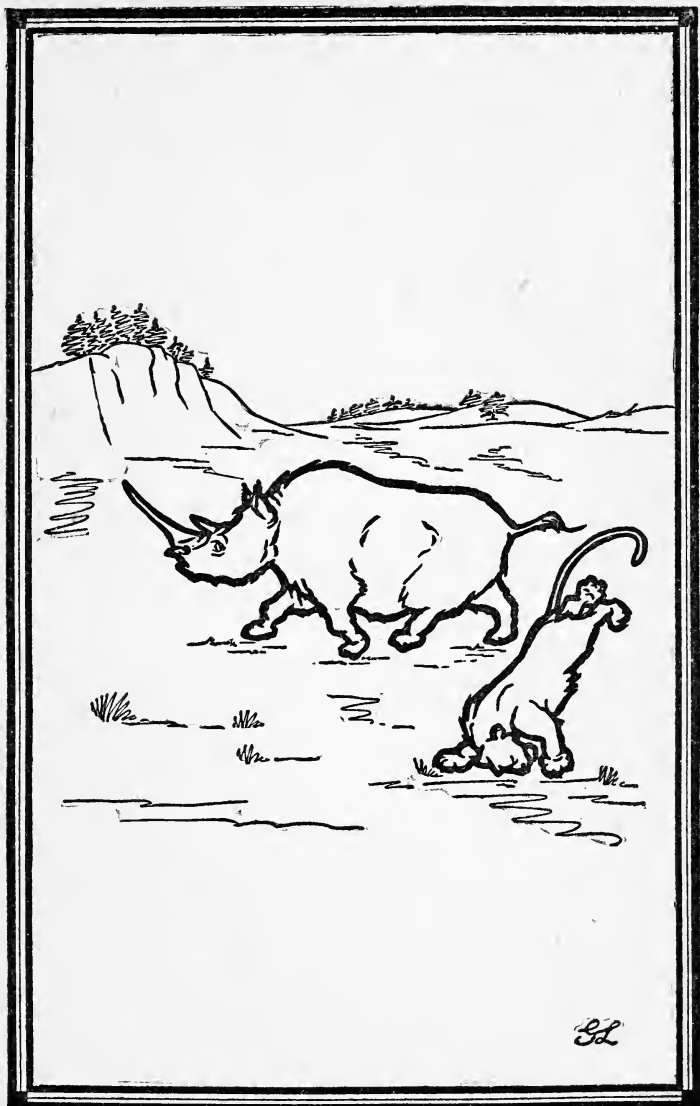
things had to be taken as they were, and this Thought Number One consumed much time. The sun had set and darkness came on before he finished with it. Then occurred Thought Number Two.

This concerned Kutnar, and although Wulli would have blushed to admit it, he loved the boy with all the unselfish devotion of a faithful dog. He had known Kutnar ever since the latter was a baby. He had known the father even longer. Pic was the Mammoth's particular man-friend; Wulli preferred the boy. He feared, admired and respected Pic, but he adored Kutnar. The Rhinoceros grit his teeth angrily as he thought of the lad now being spirited away by a stranger—one Hyena Man whom no self-respecting animal would look upon as a friend.

Stay behind? Well, he guessed not, and the mere fact that Pic had so ordered made no difference. He would follow where the Mammoth's trail led him.

It was now dark. So profound had been his reflections that he failed to observe an animal crouching in the grass. Something shot through the air, brushing the hilt of his tail as it sped behind him. Then followed a thump and a muffled screech as the unknown struck the ground.

Wulli turned quickly and lowered his nose-horn, whereat the beast uttered a frightened caterwaul and bounded away. It was the Cave Lion's half-grown son. Wulli gave a snort of contempt, then



THE CAVE LION CUB LEARNING HOW TO SHOOT

turned away to the river and plunged in. He did not expect to overtake the Mammoth that night nor even the next day. It might take weeks, months, even a year, but he was bound to find him in the end.

All that night he kept on and the following day, too, trotting or walking, but always moving and taking almost no time to graze. He was not disposed to waste precious moments, and so he fasted, drawing heavily upon his reserve fat to nourish him as he hurried along. The trail was an easy one to follow, and he kept his nose to it with a persistence that never faltered. That of the Mammoth was fresh and unmistakable. There was the scent of another grown cold and stale but the carrion odor yet clung to it, and Wulli judged him who had made it to be the Hyena Man. He got occasional whiffs of a third and familiar element and finally recognized it as belonging to Kutnar. The three were traveling the same path in a southwesterly direction.

Wulli had not gone far when he heard faint sounds behind him and detected odors in the air, both of which convinced him that he was being followed. Being a keen tracker himself, he could understand the possibility of others tracking him. The sensation of being hunted by unknown enemies made him nervous. Hyenas were annoying, but nothing worse. Wolves—real hungry ones—scared him as they scared everybody. A pack of half-starved wolves was a serious matter, even for a full-

grown rhinoceros. It was hard to tell where they would stop. Wolves or hyenas, which? The uncertainty was most distracting. Wulli made up his mind to choose some advantageous position and wait until he found out.

It was sundown when he swam across a river and stood in the shallows near its western shore. Those who followed were now close behind him, so he waded into the deeper water until all but the top of his head and shoulder-hump were submerged. There he stood motionless. Any casual observer would have thought him a water-logged tree-stump with a root—his horn—projecting from one end of it.

Wulli waited patiently, patience being one of his greatest gifts. At last he was rewarded by the sounds of animals descending the opposite bank. They were now entering the stream. It was too dark to see them, but he could hear from the noise they made that they were coming toward him. His sharp ears caught faint murmurs as of water rippling and babbling against strong swimmers. There were several of the latter, judging by the sounds made. Wulli's suspicions became reality, for soon he dimly distinguished three heads, keeping close together and coming toward him. Even in the dim light he recognized them in that short distance. Grun Waugh the Cave Lion was in the lead, followed closely by another smaller animal like him. The third beast trailing behind was a cave-hyena.

"Now, why did that stupid Rhinoceros come here?" growled a voice. The voice was Scrag's.

"Yes, Crocut, you neglected to tell us about him," grumbled the larger lion. "Now we have the Rhinoceros to account for; that makes it different."

"But he is alone," the Hyena sniveled. "You are two. It might have been worse."

"We are three," Grun Waugh sternly corrected. "If you value the meat on your bones, you will be wise and do your part."

Crocut sighed deeply. He, the conscientious objector, was plunging into the thick of battle against his own free will. He shivered at the thought.

By this time the three animals had reached shallow water and were wading ashore. Wulli could hear them sniffing along the bank. "Here it is," the Hyena announced. "I smell the Mammoth, also the friend I told you of. There is another man, too, but I find no scent of the Rhinoceros. Where did he go?"

"Here he is," said Scrag. Wulli thought himself discovered and was preparing for emergencies, when the young lion added bumptiously: "I have his scent. It leads back to the water. He must have known that I was after him, or he would not have turned around and gone back to where he came from."

"Pest," snarled his parent; "get out of the way." Scrag backed off and permitted Grun Waugh to

sniff Wulli's spoor. It was that of the Rhinoceros, sure enough, and it led back to the river.

"Wow, how unfortunate; he must have escaped us," laughed the Cave Hyena, inwardly rejoicing.

"Let not that worry you," Grun Waugh retorted. "You will have your fill of fighting when we overtake the Mammoth."

"Ow!" yowled Crocut, and then he shut up like a clam.

"The Rhinoceros has turned tail," thought Grun Waugh. "He came here and then went back again. I am glad of that. One less; so much the easier for us. The Rhinoceros is the worst of the lot—when he is mad."

Just to make sure he stood at the water's edge and gazed into the darkness. He saw nothing there, nothing but a tree-stump protruding from the river bed. He gave the signal and all three hurried away on the Mammoth's trail.

When Wulli felt assured that the Cave Beasts were past hearing him, he emerged from his refuge, shook himself and followed after.

The affair was now become complicated. There were four elements, Wulli's limit of mental arithmetic. More than that number was beyond his range. In times past he could count only two, the Mammoth and himself. Then Pic became an important factor in his life. This made three. Finally Kutnar appeared, and his education was complete. He could count four. This number fitted the present situation. The Muskman and

Kutnar represented No. 1 or the Pursued. Pic and the Mammoth following after them were the pursuers or No. 2. Grun Waugh and his gang made No. 3. Wulli himself was No. 4. Nos. 3 and 4 had changed their relative positions, and now Wulli was the tail of the procession. For some unknown reason the Cave Beasts had injected themselves into the affair, which, according to his way of thinking, did not concern them at all. And yet here they were and must be reckoned with. He felt sure that they were planning some mischief. He had considered himself as the object of their unwelcome attentions, which now, because of the change in the order of those pursuing, would fall upon Pic and the Mammoth. The three villains might attack his friends while the latter were unprepared. Wulli resolved to take a hand in this hare-and-hound game himself. It took him but a moment to pick up the combined trail of all parties concerned; then with a whisk of his tail he set himself in motion and went trotting briskly away through the darkness.

XIV

WULLI was familiar with the habits of cave-beasts. They traveled all night, and their resting was done in the daytime. He, too, traveled all that night, but instead of following the trail he branched off in a wide detour at his utmost speed. This forced night march had as its object a return to the former relative positions of the Cave Beasts and himself. It was important that they be put back where they belonged, assuming that they belonged anywhere. To accomplish this, Wulli must overtake and pass them before daybreak, for he knew that at the first sign of light the Cave Beasts would slow up. They would skulk and crawl because of their aversion to being seen, thereby enabling the Rhinoceros to find and assume his rightful position in the line. It now remained for him to make good use of the wee small hours and circumvent his enemies without their knowing it. He proceeded to act accordingly.

The sky was becoming streaked with gray when Wulli arrived at the edge of a large grove. He judged that he must be considerably in advance of the Cave Beasts by this time, although his detour was not yet completed, and he must cover consider-

able ground before he could feel positive of having secured a safe lead. He plunged into and through the woods as fast as his legs would carry him. Several hours later he emerged upon the right bank of a river. Good; so far his plans had carried perfectly. The next thing was to pick up the Mammoth's trail. This, too, was finally accomplished after a long search up the river bank. The scent of his friend was mingled with that of the odoriferous Hyena Man and Kutnar. He hunted everywhere for news of the Cave Beasts, but found none. Evidently they had not yet arrived. He had about made up his mind to enter the river when he smelled something that made him shiver. It was the odor of blood. A careful search led him to a clump of brush several rods from the bank. This place bore the scent of two men—Gonch and Kutnar. The blood was that of the boy. An ax lay near by. It was a mere stone tied to a stick, but the handle had a familiar smell.

Wulli groaned and almost collapsed. The boy had been hurt, perhaps killed. It was too dreadful to think of. His heart pounded like a hammer within his chest as he nosed about, following the Muskman's tracks. They led to the river. All trace of Kutnar had disappeared. Wulli bit his lips and looked about him despairingly. What did it all mean?

Then came the sound of snapping wood as of branches pushed aside or trodden underfoot. The Cave Beasts had arrived! Wulli hurried to the

river, plunged in and swam to the left bank. Here he stood wrist-deep in the water and waited.

A huge head thrust itself from among the trees, and then Grun Waugh's huge form debouched majestically upon the distant right bank. Scrag and Crocut were close behind him.

"Two lions and a hyena," thought Wulli. "Quite a number for me to manage." Scrag was but an inexperienced cub and not much of a fighter, but he might be counted on to do something in a pinch. The Hyena was an unknown quantity. He appeared larger and different from the ordinary brand—a formidable adversary if he but knew and would use his powers. He might do so, seeing that his side was three against one. Grun Waugh was a host in himself. The trio were now entering the water. It was in Wulli's mind to turn tail and flee in the hope of overtaking the Mammoth. With the latter's assistance, Wulli felt no doubts as to the result if Grun Waugh chose to force an engagement. However, the Mammoth might be far away; then the Rhinoceros would be overtaken and compelled to fight the Cave Beasts all by himself. It would be on ground not of his own choosing, he remembered. The idea did not please him at all. He decided to stay where he was. He stood motionless in the shoals, watching the flotilla of heads bearing down upon him.

When no more than a stone's throw separated the opposing forces, Grun Waugh suddenly uttered a surprised roar and backed water. The Rhinoceros

blocked his way. He had taken for granted that Wulli was in full flight, but now he realized his mistake and at a most embarrassing moment. He dared not venture farther, for there was something suspicious in Wulli's calm and receptive attitude. Grun Waugh knew him of old and therefore considered prudence the better part of valor. He deflected his course slightly downstream. By this act of courtesy he would avoid a collision with the Rhinoceros. Not to be outdone, the latter shifted his position to correspond. The Cave Lion found his enemy waiting to meet him, head-on as before. He growled with vexation, then turned and swam upstream. This was hard, battling against the swift current. Wulli kept pace with him. It required little exertion on his part, walking as he did on the river bottom. Grun Waugh snarled with rage. The Rhinoceros was determined to give him a warm welcome.

While their lord was vainly maneuvering for a landing, Scrag and Crocut conducted themselves in a most unbusiness-like manner. According to recognized naval rules, one or both of them should have outflanked the Rhinoceros while the latter faced Grun Waugh. In that case Wulli would have found himself in a most embarrassing position—attacked on several sides at once. However, Scrag and Crocut simplified matters by trailing after their leader. It being Grun Waugh's fight and his part to do the dangerous work, the other two let it go at that. It did not occur to any of the



WULLI DEFIES THE CAVE BEASTS

three that this, their habitual practice, might be departed from in the present instance. The two lesser animals followed their leader, and whenever the latter tried to land he found the Rhinoceros ready and waiting for him.

Grun Waugh felt terribly incensed. With all his courage, he dared not advance and impale himself upon that terrible nose-horn. He reviled Wulli under his breath for his obstinacy, but that did him no good. Then he tried threats, roaring loudly and showing his cruel teeth. He was fearful to look upon, but the Rhinoceros failed to appreciate this. Having determined that he was pursuing the best possible course, he refused to budge from it. Not for an instant would he permit the Cave Lion to enter shallow water and rest himself.

"Go away," roared Grun Waugh. "We will not hurt you this time, provided you stand aside and let us pass."

"Pass where?" asked Wulli in his blandest manner. "Your home is behind you. You are going the wrong way."

"And you will not stand aside?"

"Not if I can help it," replied the Rhinoceros. "You do not belong here. Go home and take your hyenas back with you."

Scrag nearly had a fit as he heard himself thus insulted. To be classed as a hyena was more than he could bear.

"Pig!" he wailed, forgetting his paddling. His head sank; the waters closed over it. When it

reappeared, Scrag was blinded and half-choked, also the starch was taken out of him entirely. He was cold and tired and made up his mind then and there that he could be of more service to the world as a live lion than mere fish-food. He faced about, wheezing and panting, and sailed away on his return trip.

Crocut saw the young lion scudding past him. He was suddenly reminded that his wind and strength were ebbing fast. Just about enough fuel left in his bunkers to carry him back where he came from, so he, too, swung around and steered a straight course homeward.

Thus was the Cave Beast squadron shorn of much of its seeming strength. The battle was not yet over, however, for Grun Waugh still persisted in his efforts to effect a landing. But Wulli held the bridgehead, and the Cave Lion, try as he would, could accomplish nothing. Finally, he, too, gave up, tired and discouraged and steamed away, leaving the Rhinoceros in full possession of the field.

Wulli remained at his post for some time to make sure. When convinced that there was nothing more to be feared from the Cave Beasts, he again went about his business. For some time he trudged back and forth in an agony of indecision, but there seemed only one way to go—after the Mammoth whose comfort he yearned for and sorely needed. So he made that his choice, following un-

tiringly over hill and valley, through glades and across swiftly flowing streams.

His woolly coat was torn and shabby and nearly every ounce of his superfluous flesh had been consumed, when at last he came to great mountains, so lofty their peaks seemed to touch the sky. He groaned dismally. Cliffs and high places were the last things on earth any rhinoceros would care to meet. Wulli would have given half of his life just then if the Mammoth and Pic had suddenly appeared before him, homeward bound. He hated mountains. They made him dizzy and weak at his knees and elbows. He gazed despairingly at the towering crests. The trail of his crony the Mammoth led to them, clear and unmistakable. There was no help for it. Wulli set his jaws tightly together, and with many misgivings for his future, plunged blindly and boldly upward among the peaks and crags.

XV

THE left bank of the Midouze River was for Pic the parting of the ways between himself and his son. All trace of the latter had vanished absolutely and completely. He tried every known art of woodcraft but without success. Search the river bank as he would, he could find no sign of the missing boy. "The traitor has made use of the water to play me a trick," he thought, but just what the trick was, he could not determine. "He has fled to his country in the southland," he told the Mammoth. "If we continue in the same direction as we have been going, we will again find this Gonch following the straight path."

There was nothing left to do but pursue this plan. Thus far, the Muskman's flight had been on a straight line to the southwest. It was reasonable to presume that in time he would so continue. He had doubled or side-stepped to avoid his pursuers, but he must get back to the line in the end.

Heretofore the Mammoth's nose or trunk-tip had guided the way, but now that the trail was lost, the responsibility for taking the right course devolved on Pic. It was a case of direction, and so he made use of his knowledge of the sun's position

at rising and setting, also other signs that good woodsmen knew for determining where they wished to go.

"I will find this man, even if I have to go to the earth's end to do it," he vowed, and the way he scowled boded ill for the Muskman. He guided the Mammoth through the Midouze region across another river, the Adour, to a low wet region where traveling was most difficult. It was a veritable network of brooks and rivulets with ponds, sloughs and soft spots scattered promiscuously between. From black muck and mud, the soil gradually changed to marl, then sand and clay as the land surface inclined upward. This latter was seamed everywhere with tiny streams, through which flowed the drainage from a more elevated region. The two travelers were now ascending the slopes, leading to a mountain range which barred their way, extending in a long line from east to west.

At sight of the mountains, Pic said to Mammoth: "The rough country lies before us. Among the rocks and cliffs we will find where men live."

But when he drew nearer to them, he was much taken aback and his views underwent a decided change. The vastness of what he saw was appalling. The steep slopes rose to tremendous heights; so high that many of the peaks were lost to sight far above the clouds. The spaces or valleys between them were filled with masses of snow and ice, from which torrents of water gushed forth and down the mountain sides, bringing great quantities

of sand and clay with them. At times, great chunks of rock or ice detached themselves from high places and came crashing down. The ground trembled beneath their impact as though shaken by an earthquake.

To Pic, the sight and sound of all this was beyond his power of understanding. He had lived his life in the lowlands and knew little of mountains. It was not cold—where he and the Mammoth stood. Winter might be near at hand, but the sun shone brightly and he could feel its warm rays. And yet, there was ice, high above his head, and ice meant cold, a discomfort he was unprepared for. In his hurried departure from the Vézère Valley he had not thought to bring a hide with him as protection from the cold. There appeared to be need of such protection if he scaled those mountains. They were not homes of men. The southland must lie beyond, and to reach it he must cross the mountain barrier.

A stupendous undertaking; Pic could appreciate the difficulty of such a task, or rather he could appreciate only a fraction of the difficulty. "Do men climb over such things or do they go around them?" he asked himself. "Go around them," something within him answered. He gazed to the east; mountains in a never-ending chain as far as the eye could reach. Westward it was the same, except that they seemed to taper off like the tail of a gigantic beast. There was no guiding angel to watch over him and say, "Turn west and skirt the mountain barrier;

then all will be well." The Mammoth could not help him and Pic saw no way but to choose the straightest, although most difficult, course. He gave a command and Hairi marched straight ahead—to the mountains towering above him.

Up, up and never down. At times the Mammoth assumed an almost erect position, so steep was the climb. Pic had to hold on tightly to avoid sliding backward and off the beast's tail. When night came he was only too glad to stop and rest, snuggled up close to his big friend to keep himself warm. No use of wishing that he had a bison robe to wrap around and protect his body. When day came and the journey was resumed, he dismounted and proceeded on foot, hoping that the exercise would drive off the chill which made him shiver from head to foot. Both he and the Mammoth made frequent stops, for the higher they climbed, the more quickly they tired. The long and arduous ascent had by this time brought them into a rarefied atmosphere—thin air—which imposed a severe test upon their hearts and lungs.

Trees, bushes and other vegetation gave way to evergreens as they mounted to the region of perpetual snow, and finally these were left behind them. Snow, ice and low rugged crests alone remained.

One line of these crests, projecting from the hard-packed snow, extended for a great distance across our travelers' line of march. A second similar rock backbone lay in the dim distance, running

parallel with the first. Man and elephart were crossing the intervening space, when suddenly the Mammoth uttered a loud bellow and stopped short, his feet bunched beneath him like four wooden posts. "The ground! It shakes!" he squealed, much alarmed.

Pic halted, bent low and held his ear to the ground. The latter did tremble; he felt it. He also heard a muffled rumbling roar that seemed to originate in the bowels of the earth. He shivered, but this may have been due as much to the cold he felt as to fear of the unknown. He could offer no explanation of the mystery. The Mammoth was far more frightened than he was, so he coaxed and teased the great beast, telling him there was nothing to fear and that he must move on.

Hairi yielded after much persuasion, although he now proceeded half-heartedly and timidly, for the trembling ground inspired him with great dread. He was soon treated to another unpleasant surprise. The space between the two lines of crests was a waste of hard-packed snow which became broken up into hummocks and ice-blocks as the two advanced. Again Hairi stopped and stood shaking like a leaf as he caught sight of a long deep rent in the snow-plain. It emitted a deep, booming roar—a thousand Cave Lion voices rolled into one.

This was too much for the Mammoth's overbalanced nerves. He stopped and refused to budge. He would stand there until he starved and the hyenas could come and polish his bones, but he

would never go near that hole which growled so strangely. Pic advanced to the rent in the snow-plain. It widened and deepened as he approached. He saw a gleam of ice beneath the snow—no rock, nothing but ice. The roaring grew louder. Pic kept on, although almost overwhelmed by the timidity that even brave men feel when confronted by dangers they do not understand. A few more steps and he stood upon the brink of the rent. He sank to his knees, dizzy and scared almost out of his wits. Down, down, down descended the cold ice-walls to some unknown depth beyond the range of human vision, where the roar of rushing water echoed and re-echoed until it boomed like thunder.

Pic began to comprehend. The snow-plain was an ice-field of tremendous depth; the rent was a crack in the ice; and the booming noise came from the water which flowed through the bottom of the crack. These things could be seen by any one who dared stand on the brink of the rent and look at them, but although Pic had a clear head when moving about cliffs and high places, the vast depth and cold emptiness made him so giddy he could scarcely stand.

The ice-rent or crevasse was thousands of feet deep, an indication of the ice-field's depth. The two lines of crests were in reality the tops of lofty mountain chains, their intervening space filled almost to the top with slowly moving ice; a glacier with a torrent of water flowing through its base.

Pic returned to the Mammoth and explained



"HE SANK TO HIS KNEES, DIZZY AND SCARED"

matters as best he could. There was a deep crack in the ice and the water running through it made much disturbance and noise. He would not ask his friend to jump over the crack; it was too wide for that; nor would he ask him to go near it. All that Hairi need do was to follow. Pic would lead him around it and to a place of safety.

The Mammoth appeared much relieved and consented to move on. Pic led him on a line parallel to the crevasse until the latter ended in a pile of shattered ice-blocks. Here the glacier's surface was much broken and the two friends were obliged to watch their steps carefully on the slippery ice to avoid bad tumbles. In one place the surface inclined to form a chute or narrow slide, and Hairi in particular had a slow, hard time of it reaching the bottom. He and Pic were so busy finding their way around the end of the crevasse that they had neither eyes nor ears for that which followed in their wake. It was a shaggy-haired animal with nose held closely to the ground and following the same route over which Pic and the Mammoth had just traveled. Where the path turned at right angles, the newcomer looked up and saw the crevasse yawning in front of him. The sight threw him into a panic. Away he tore like mad along the ice-cliff squealing, "Oowee, oowee!" at the top of his lungs. Once he slipped and fell terribly near the dreadful gulf. He rose trembling with fear. His vocal cords became paralyzed and he could not utter a sound. He staggered toward the ice-hum-

mocks near the end of the crevasse, foam-flecked and steaming with the dew of death. The ground suddenly fell away in front of him and he began to slide. Too late; he uttered a last despairing squeak, then resigned himself to the inevitable, and with eyes tightly shut, went skidding rapidly on his downward flight to the unknown horrors awaiting him.

XVI

PIC and the Mammoth had passed around the crevasse and were putting it behind them as fast as they could when several shrill squeals rang out and startled them nearly out of their wits. Both stopped and looked back up the incline they had just descended. The sounds seemed to have come from the ice-blocks and hummocks at the top. Hairi's mouth was wide open; his eyes were nearly popping from his head. Man and elephant stood rigid, listening, but all was now quiet. The squeals were not repeated.

"That voice," said the Mammoth in an awed whisper. "How strange. It seems as though I had heard it before." The two friends were still staring up the slide, when suddenly, without a sign of warning, a shaggy beast hove in sight at the top and shot down like a toboggan. It stood upright with feet spread far out. Had the creature's legs been longer so as to elevate its center of gravity, it must have toppled over and tumbled ingloriously to the bottom. However, its legs were like four stout pegs. This made the weight hang low and the downward glide was completed right side up. As the newcomer coasted along the level, its speed slackened and gradually it came to a stop. This



"A SHAGGY BEAST HOVE IN SIGHT"

happened to be right in front of the two friends. Here it stood, motionless, with eyes shut tight.

“Wulli! My own Wulli! Where did you come from?” bellowed the astonished Mammoth, staring as in a dream at his partner, whose dramatic arrival had occurred so suddenly and unexpectedly.

The Woolly Rhinoceros did not respond. He had made up his mind that he was falling into that dreadful hole and would be dead when he struck the bottom. He seemed to be sliding dreamily through space, falling more slowly every moment instead of faster as he should have done. The end was surprisingly calm and peaceful, for he reached eternity without a jar. Then sounded sweet music—the voice of the one he loved best. His was a happy journey to the golden gates, too unreal to believe. He opened one eye. There stood Pic and the Mammoth in the flesh. He began to feel grave doubts. “Am I dead?” he inquired feebly. “If so, cover me with stones and do not let the hyenas eat me.”

He spoke in the hushed voice of a departed spirit; that made it funny. Pic forgot his surprise and laughed loudly. “What makes you think you are dead?” he asked, and laughed again.

“I fell in that awful hole,” simpered Wulli, still unconvinced. “Every bone in my body is broken, and yet, strange to say, I feel quite comfortable.”

“Why not?” Pic demanded. “You only slid down that hill and you are not hurt a bit. What brought you here?”

"Brought me?" Wulli shed his angel wings and opened his other eye. "I don't know," he replied. "My legs, I guess."

"He must have followed us," said the Mammoth, his surprise fast changing to joy as he realized that he was really looking upon the Woolly Rhinoceros. "It is wonderful that we three can be together again."

"Four of us would be better," Pic muttered sadly. On being thus reminded of Kutnar, Wulli assumed an air of the deepest gloom. He told of his affair with the Cave Beasts and how he had come upon the trail of the Hyena Man and the smell of blood.

"Whose blood?" groaned Pic. His face had become deadly pale.

"Kutnar's," Wulli replied. "Several drops were on the ground. A stone-stick lay near them."

Pic's knees trembled. He spread out his hands as though to save himself from falling. "Dead? I can't believe it," he said in a dazed sort of way. "Why should Gonch kill the boy? And yet—Agh, I am so afraid. We were closing in upon them and the miscreant may have murdered him to save himself. You saw nobody?"

"No," answered Wulli.

"And there was not much blood?"

"Very little; almost none."

"Strange," muttered Pic. "The boy may be yet alive. Then there is the ax; that puzzles me. Why did not the traitor take it with him?" Thus he

aroused hope in his own breast, but this soon changed to depression. The next moment he raged and cursed Gonch for killing his boy and finally gave himself up to the deepest despair. The two animals watched these changing moods, with much concern. "I do not believe that the boy is dead," said Hairi trying to comfort him.

"Nor I," added Wulli.

"Nor I." This third voice was a mere squeak and it seemed to come from the ground.

"Who said that?" Pic looked up at his friends, then at the ice about him.

"I said it and I mean it," squeaked the voice again. It came from a little rat-like animal which was sitting upon its hind legs a short distance away. Its white fur made it almost indistinguishable from the hard-packed snow. Pic was the first to see the little creature. He pointed to it. His friends stared as though they could not believe their eyes.

"Obi!" squealed the Woolly Rhinoceros.

"Wulli!" piped the midget in response.

The Mammoth's trunk reached toward the squeaks, whereupon he who made them ran up the trunk and jumped off onto one of the huge tusks. Here he perched bolt upright looking first at the Rhinoceros then at the Mammoth, out of his small beady eyes.

"It is Obi," said Hairi delightedly. "How good it feels to see him again."

Obi the Lemming danced up and down like a good fellow. He loved to be appreciated and was

now enjoying himself thoroughly. "You know that I go wherever the ice goes," he replied in his thin voice. "Some think me good for nothing because I am so small; but let me tell you something, big Trog-man, friend of all animals. Your young one has run away but he is alive."

Pic could scarcely believe his ears. "Alive? how do you know this?" he asked.

"I saw him."

"Where?"

Obi pointed a stubby paw westward. "He was with a Trog-man who wanted to kill me. The boy had that piece of skin he throws stones with. He threw at me but he made a nice face and I knew that he meant no harm. The stone flew wide and so I got away."

Glorious news! Pic grinned from ear to ear. He howled and danced for very joy. The world now appeared all sunshine, for Kutnar was alive. Hairi caught the spirit of his master and endeavored to imitate him, dancing up and down and shaking his tusks so violently that the Lemming was forced to jump off. He slipped on the ice and sat down with a bump. Pic laughed, Wulli squealed and Obi squeaked at the sight. Even the Mammoth forgot how to look sad. He got upon his feet again thereby throwing his friends almost into convulsions. His fall had ripped a large patch of wool from his trousers' seat. He knew nothing of this, which made it all the more comical, seeing that the joke was on him. The whole world

looked bright and gay just then. The crevasse was screamingly funny; the booming torrent, sweet music; and Pic solemnly vowed that the air had grown quite warm. Everybody agreed to all of this, simply because Kutnar was alive and now they could go on their way again with light hearts to look for him.

Finally when all were sufficiently quieted down to talk matters over, Pic turned to Obi and said, "Never will I forget the sunshine and comfort you have brought us. Some day I may repay this service. And now you must go with us and show the way?"

The Lemming was greatly disturbed by this latter suggestion. "Go with you?" he squeaked in a most solemn manner. "No, that would not be right. I just came from there. You have forgotten that a Lemming cannot go to the same place twice in one season."

At this, Pic looked so disappointed, Obi really felt sorry for him. "It would be dreadful for me to go twice to the same place," he explained. "I go wherever the snow and ice is but I would die if I covered the same ground twice. I really could not think of such a thing."

Obi was a Scandinavian and a most conscientious little animal. He was a tireless rover but like the Mammoth and Rhinoceros, he preferred cold to warm weather and only ventured south when there was plenty of ice. He took his traveling very seriously as though it were a most important



"HIS FALL HAD RIPPED A LARGE PATCH OF WOOL FROM HIS TROUSERS'
SEAT"

duty. Some animals believed it was he who arranged the winter season, for no matter when and where he appeared, there was sure to be ice and snow behind him. Seeing that his scruples forbade his accompanying the party to a region he had so recently visited, he did the next best thing, giving most careful instructions as to the route Gonch and Kutnar were traveling. "If you fail to find the way, ask any animals you meet and they will set you right," he said; and then it was good-bye and good-luck to Obi and the party proceeded without him.

The line of journey was now changed to the west and slightly north. Apparently the Muskman had not continued in a straight line but had turned due west, thus avoiding the Pyrenees Mountains over which our friends were now traveling. The passage over these mountains was most difficult. Now it was up, up until they stood far above the clouds amid bleak wastes of ice and snow; then down, down into the almost bottomless valleys with their tangled shrubbery and swirling streams. So it went with constant repetition until the party covered more distance to the sky and back to earth again than they did in a horizontal line. The Woolly Rhinoceros in particular, found this sort of touring most trying. It was not so bad going up but the coming down part terrified him. He was no mountaineer and he lost his head completely whenever he realized that the ground beneath him was no longer within easy jumping distance. In

such circumstances, he stopped and squealed like a big booby, too frightened to move either up or down. This failing soon made him a nuisance to Pic and the Mammoth who were managing fairly well and making no complaints. Finally when Wulli balked for about the fiftieth time, the Mammoth lost patience. The Rhinoceros stood in front of him, squealing "Oowee, oowee!" and blocking the way. He snorted impatiently, then seized Wulli's tail with his trunk as though to drag him to one side, whereupon the Rhinoceros proceeded briskly onward. Hairi released his hold and the Rhinoceros stopped. The Mammoth took a fresh grip and Wulli responded by moving on once more. Most extraordinary! but Hairi asked no questions and held on to his partner's tail, for he saw that it produced results. Pic who had been an interested spectator, finally remarked: "Wulli is afraid of falling. As long as you hold his tail, he will fear no more."

This was quite true. A simple remedy but the cure was immediate and complete. The Rhino's tail was but a bit of frayed rope and would not have withstood a fraction of his weight. Wulli's new sense of security may have been fancied but what of it? The Mammoth held his tail and that was enough. From then on, they got along finely, sailing up and down without a hitch and whenever Wulli showed symptoms of balkiness, the Mammoth cured him instantly by taking a grip on his tail.

They met the Chamois and the Ibex and the Snow Grouse, one after another, and learned that they were following the right path. The two first-named animals knew the direction only in a general way but the Snow Grouse flew about a great deal and kept himself well informed as to what was going on. From him, Pic learned that a tribe of cave-men lived far to the east on that side of the mountains which faced the sea. By continuing due west, the party would pass along the southern or opposite side of these mountains. Here they would be protected from the bitter winds and could cross to the north side at the proper time.



THE JOURNEY ACROSS THE PYRENEES

XVII

WINTER had descended upon the mountains and valleys of northern Spain. Snow covered the slopes and lowlands. High above the ice-bound surface of the River Pas, opened the Cavern of Castillo, near whose entrance, Totan and his band were gathered about a roaring fire. Skin garments now relieved their summer nakedness. These were no more than untrimmed hides fastened about their bodies, hair outward. They were much frayed and blotched with bare patches which gave them an extremely shabby appearance. These garments had seen more than one winter season, for hides were scarce. The hunting had grown worse and worse and many a hide had been chewed and swallowed for the small nourishment it contained. The Men of Castillo in their penury were driven to eating the very clothes off their backs for the want of something better. Even the hyenas had packed up and gone away from a country that offered such poor pickings. Nobody regretted their absence. There was no need for scavengers or undertakers. The Men of Castillo attended to such matters, themselves. Whenever a man died, his companions made the funeral arrangements their duty and an occasion

for general rejoicing, using the corpse itself as material for the funeral feast.

At times, parties of men would detach themselves from the fire and sally forth in search of game. Rarely did they come back with anything worth eating. The little they did kill was poor enough and they ate it then and there. Not infrequently, a band would return numbering one or two less than when it set forth. At such times, those returning would appear well-fed and contented and would curl up by the fire to rest and aid their digestion. It was a case of each man for himself. He who hungered, must go forth and hunt his food. If he perished from weakness or exposure or was slain by wild beasts, his troubles were ended and his companions devoured what was left of him.

Totan and a dozen of his followers had but recently returned to Castillo from one of these hunting-trips. They and the rest of the band were now gazing down the mountain side at two men near its base who were slowly ascending. Even at that distance, Totan recognized one of the newcomers. "Gonch!" he exclaimed in surprise. "I thought him dead long before this. And who is it that I see with him? It must be the Mammoth Man, maker of wonderful flints."

When the pair had completed two-thirds of the ascent, their forms and features could be easily distinguished by those watching from above. All recognized Gonch. The one with him was but a boy. A murmur of voices broke the stillness. Totan

scowled and gnashed his teeth until his jaws cracked. "I fear that our comrade will be disappointed with the welcome we give him," he growled. "It will be a warm one." He looked knowingly at the fire as he said this, meanwhile licking his lips and grinning like a hyena.

Gonch arrived at the end of his long climb and stepped upon the cave-threshold. The boy Kutnar stood behind him. No shouts nor other noisy welcome greeted his appearance. He brought no food and his companion was a boy—not a man as might have been expected.

Such a reception was no more nor less than Gonch had anticipated and he was prepared for it. Neither his wit nor courage had deserted him and he now saw the need of both.

"I have come back as I promised," he began boldly. "The journey has been a long one. I have survived much danger and suffering but I am here and alive."

"Alive? Yes, for a time," said Totan in as honeyed a voice as a bear would be capable of. "We see that you have brought the Mammoth Man with you. The journey must have been too much for him. He appears to have shrunk. No doubt you can explain why."

"Young he is but more than match for our best hunter," Gonch replied without flinching. "None can equal his skill with the fling-stone. If you do not believe, try him."

Everybody laughed, not with genuine humor but

in the only way these savage men knew how to laugh. One of them, a young fellow barely out of his teens, strutted forward and sneered in Kutnar's face. Up to this time, the latter had remained a passive listener and spectator, staring curiously at the throng but at the sound of taunting laughter and the sight of him who sneered, he drew back and scowled angrily.

"A match!" roared the hetman springing to his feet. "Into the cave, every one of you, and give the youngsters plenty of room. Let the Stone Thrower try him. If he fails, I will be the first to pick his bones."

Thus cautioned, the Castillan tyro selected his best stone and placed it carefully in the cleft end of his fling-stick. Kutnar did not hesitate, even though this was his first test in single combat. In a moment he saw what was expected of him. Quick as lightning, he unwound the thong from his waist and set a pebble in place.

"Good," muttered Gonch between his clenched teeth. "The boy bears himself like a true warrior. I would be his friend if I could be anyone's. No man, young or old, lives who can best him at his own game."

Totan was now in fine spirits. This was good sport, a fight to the death, although rough and tumble with stout cudgels and grown men would have been better. Stone-throwing was child's play but there was novelty in such a contest and it might prove entertaining. He hustled his followers out

of the way into the cave-entrance and thus gave the two gladiators the whole threshold to themselves. Kutnar took his place at one extremity of the ledge; the Stone Thrower stood at the other. The spectators howled joyfully; then at a sign from Totan, all became quiet.

Swish! The Castillan drew back his arm and made the first throw—not badly aimed but Kutnar saw the stone coming and dropped flat. The missile whizzed over his head. Instantly he was up again, whirling his sling. Hiss! the pebble sped like a bullet. No chance to dodge a thing like that. Before the Stone Thrower could tell what struck him, he lay sprawling upon the ledge. His skull was cracked but there was no more than a bruise upon his temple to show for it.

Nobody laughed this time. All stared in wonder at the fallen man, then at the boy. Kutnar had no eyes for those about him. He stood motionless, mouth half-open, watching the contortions of his victim. This was the first human being he had slain. A fair fight and not one of his choosing but his triumph was tinged with remorse. It was with such feelings that he crossed the ledge and stood over the vanquished. Every pair of eyes followed him. Every voice was hushed. The stillness of death was in the air. And then as every Castillan waited breathless anticipating the final blow, the victor knelt upon the rock and rubbed his foe-man's forehead.

A chorus of astonished grunts arose. Kutnar

heard the sound of bare feet scraping on the ledge behind him. He looked around and saw the giant hetman.

"Well done," growled the Castilian leader. "Even though it were a lucky stroke, a boy who can use a toy like that must be good for something. And yet you are but a child. The Mammoth Man is not a child." As he said this, he scowled at Gonch who was standing near. The latter made haste to divert his chieftain's mind.

"The boy is a skilled hunter," he explained. "He can kill food enough for a dozen men. If you do not believe, try him."

The cave-men were now gathering about the lad, pointing at both him and the sling he held. By look and act it was clear that they were deeply impressed with the way he had borne himself. Even the hetman eyed him approvingly. "Here, you," he said to the men nearest him. "Take him down to the river and see what he can do."

The boy gazed longingly at the fire. He felt cold and tired. He would have given almost anything for a chance to warm his body and rest himself but this could not be. Those chosen to escort him were already descending the mountain side and beckoning him to follow. Kutnar looked appealingly at Gonch, but the latter's back was turned, so he merely sighed and went away with the cave-men for a test of his skill at food-gathering.

When the party had taken itself off, Totan led the Muskman to one side. "Son, did you say?

But that does not make him the father. What has become of the Mammoth Man? You promised to bring him with you."

Gonch gave a brief account of his doings in the Mousterian country and his dealings with Pic, the Weapon Maker. He described the latter as a hetman too, but made no mention of his physical powers.

"A hetman?" Totan lifted his eyebrows, then scowled darkly. "He would be no more than a flint-worker here. But you have not yet said why he failed to come with you."

"I used the boy as a lure," chuckled Gonch. "The Mammoth Man is following to rescue him. The son is a prize in himself but before long we will have the father too."

"That may be," Totan grumbled. "But I would have preferred the man. You should have brought him with you to make sure."

"More easily said than done," the Muskman replied. "No man could force him to do anything against his will."

"No man?" The hetman scowled with wounded pride and jealousy of the unknown champion. Gonch gazed at him vindictively.

"He would yield to no man, for no man is stronger or braver than this giant weapon maker. He is mightier than the Cave Lion, larger than yourself and——"

"You lie," roared the now thoroughly aroused hetman, beating his bristly chest with both fists and

displaying his great bull-teeth. "No human being is my equal. I could eat your lion-man."

Gonch exulted inwardly although he was careful not to betray his true feelings and draw the other's rage upon himself. "You might find him a big mouthful," he said. "This weapon maker can crush men's bones in his hands. I have felt his grip. Never have I known such power. That is why I used trickery to bring him here. Such a big strong man." Gonch lowered his voice and said, "Perhaps it is well that I did not bring him. It is not yet too late. He may be induced to return. We can send the boy to him and——"

"Ar-r-r!" Totan's face swelled and reddened as though it would burst. He was no coward and the knowledge that there existed a foeman worthy of his steel, only aroused his fighting spirit. He was like a pit-dog held in leash, all aquiver with waiting for the joy of blood and battle. For a moment, the fight-lust nearly robbed him of speech.

"Bring me this man," he snarled in a choking voice. "He is mine—mine; I will tear him to pieces with my teeth and eat his living body. Bring him to me and quickly. I cannot wait."

"Have patience; he will soon come," was the answer. Totan could only glare and pant. He listened sullenly as Gonch told of Pic's pursuit. The Mousterian weapon maker was like a lion robbed of its cub. He would come; no doubt about that.

The hetman was only partly appeased. There was some pleasure in his feelings of anticipation

but he felt a consuming impatience to get the Lion-Man—as he called him—within his reach. His fingers itched for him so, he could hardly wait.

“But the Lion-Man might not come,” he growled irritably. “In that case, I am sure that things will go hard with you.”

Gonch pretended not to see the implied threat as he answered, “Do not worry. He will come,” and there the conversation ended, for although Totan fretted and fumed, he saw that he could do nothing but wait and give Gonch the time needed to make good his promise.

XVIII

ON the way down the mountain side, Kutnar had an excellent opportunity to gain a better knowledge of his new acquaintances.

His first impressions were far from flattering. A more squalid, beast-like lot of men he had never seen. He mistrusted them at sight. On his long journey to the southland he had anticipated much pleasure in meeting them and learning about their superior flint industry. The latter was as disappointing as the men themselves. Fine weapons? Never had he gazed upon worse. He saw not a single flint ax-head or poniard; in fact, no stone implements with the exception of a few badly-hewn quartzite flakes. Apparently the Castellans relied almost entirely upon wood. Their clubs, javelins and fling-sticks were all made of this material. Even it was badly chosen and shaped. Kutnar made a wry face as he looked at his companions and their miserable equipment. "These cannot be Gonch's people," he finally consoled himself. "Soon we will pass on to the country of the southrons and the sooner, the better."

Deep down in his heart, Kutnar knew that it was not a sight of the southrons nor their flint workmanship that he really craved. A quick turnabout and

a trip homeward would have pleased him more than anything on earth. He was terribly homesick. It seemed ages since he had run away from father and friends. The knowledge that he had so recently slain a fellow-being, added to his depression. He thought of Totan and that reminded him of Pic. Both were strong men but there the resemblance ended. His father had a heart; the Castilian het-man appeared to possess none. "I have at least one good friend near me," the boy remembered. Gonch was there and that gave him great comfort. "I am no longer a baby," he thought, so he determined to bear up patiently until the time came for the long journey homeward.

Meanwhile the party had reached the end of their descent and were making their way across the lowland to the River Pas. Suddenly one of the men grunted and all stopped short. He who had signalled said to Kutnar in a low voice, "A hare! Quick boy; now is your chance to show what you can do." The sling was loaded and ready before the man had ceased speaking. Kutnar moved noiselessly ahead of his companions to within throwing range. Whizz, sped the stone and a big snow-white hare leaped from a clump of bushes and bounded away. "A miss," one of the hunters sneered as the boy glided forward like a cat. They saw him reach down among the bushes and then stand erect holding some animal by its long ears—a hare. There had been two. The one first seen had escaped but Kutnar had bagged the second.



Ed

KUTNAR BAGS A HARE

The cave-men were astounded. This was indeed fine shooting but there was more to follow. The lad flung his quarry to them and then went speeding across the snow-plain after hare Number One. The cave-men followed closely and were treated to a lesson in stalking which opened their eyes. Hare Number One had not fled far. His tracks were easily seen in the snow and it was not long before Kutnar saw him lying in a ball and trusting in his protective coloring to escape unseen. But this availed him nothing. He waited too long for his next jump, thinking he had but a fling-stick to deal with. He too was bagged and the boy found himself the center of the most thoroughly surprised lot of men that one would hope to see.

"He is not of this world," said one of the band.

"Nor is his fling-string," said another. "He has but to wave it and animals drop to the ground dead."

These and other remarks, Kutnar listened to and they pleased him, for he was but a boy and relished the compliments of men. They made him feel as though he were a man too. Another hare was sighted and bagged and thus the hunt went merrily on. Kutnar even tried his skill on a young boar. He did not kill the animal but he disabled it so that the hunters could easily complete the work he had begun. When the party turned homeward, they took with them four hares, three grouse and the boar; and Kutnar had killed them all. A wonderful bag; all were agreed on that; and they were

agreed too that as a hunter and provider, Kutnar was worth his weight in the finest flints ever shaped by mortal man. When they arrived at Castillo and Totan learned of Kutnar's success, he was mightily pleased. "If the boy can thus shame our best hunters, what could not the grown men of his tribe do?" he thought. This reminded him of the Lion Man and he revelled in the thought of what would happen if the latter would only come within his reach.

The Muskman's star was again in the ascendancy. The boy had been tried and found all that any hunter could wish. Were these men jealous of his prowess? Certainly not. No half-starved beast or human being looks askance at the hand that feeds it. One and all praised his skill with the fling-string. Boy or no boy, he was certainly a godsend to these half-famished men and they were not backward in saying so. Some of them went so far as to volunteer their services to keep him supplied with the finest pebbles. They were not the ones to permit his ammunition to run low. They even gave him the hide of the boar he had killed. A chilled body might result in a stiff arm which would prevent accurate shooting and of course that would never do. In fact they were anxious to do anything for the lad that promised to improve their own health and comfort.

There was some satisfaction in finding himself welcome even among these savage men but in spite of that, Kutnar felt homesick and uneasy. "Why do we continue to stay here?" he asked the Musk-

man, but the latter merely answered: "Be patient. It is for a short time only. When the snow melts, we will be on our way again." Kutnar forced himself to be content with this. He was but a boy who respected men and revered his friends. Gonch was his man-friend and it never occurred to him that the Muskman was playing him false; and so he did his part, which was no small task for now that his skill was known, he did more than half the hunting for the whole band. In addition to his skill with the sling, he possessed no mean knowledge of woodcraft, showing his companions many things about tracking and trapping game that they knew nothing of. Kutnar became leader of the hunters; that is, he did most of the work. The pebbles flew straight and far from his sling and there was both speed and force behind them. For their part, the cave-men who accompanied him on his hunting trips, did little more than watch him open-mouthed and retrieve the game he killed, like a pack of dogs. Kutnar deep down in his heart, despised these men as he did their weapons. Of them he had more to learn and also something that greatly changed his opinion of his good friend Gonch.

The latter was present one morning on one of the hunting-trips. It chanced that on this same morning a mighty hunter had descended from the foot-hills and was engaged in stalking a boar, grubbing about in the snow on the left bank of the River Pas. Kutnar and his band of cave-men had observed this boar but not the mighty hunter of the

foot-hills. Both sets of stalkers closed in upon their intended victim, who finding himself too much hunted, ran squealing away leaving his persecutors to face each other. A tawny body shot from the bushes and in a flash, one of the cave-men lay upon the ground beneath the paw of a huge lion. Kutnar was in the van of those who by much shouting and waving, so bewildered the big cat that it relinquished its victim and crawled away. The man was still alive although badly mauled. "Friends should ever help each other," ran through Kutnar's brain as he bent over the unfortunate and wiped the blood from his face with a bunch of leaves. Not that the man was his particular friend, but his heart was filled with pity at sight of a fellow-being in distress. Suddenly he was dragged to his feet and thrust roughly aside. He turned and faced Gonch.

"Stand back, boy; do not meddle," cried the Muskman and then before Kutnar knew what his friend was about, the latter despatched the wounded man with a blow of his ax. Then as though this were not enough, he was the first of the hunters to spring upon the body with teeth and hands. As the boy looked on in horror at the man-pack snarling and devouring their dead comrade, the cobwebs fell from his eyes and he saw the Muskman in his true colors, a hyena-man unfit for the friendship of human being or beast. It was a terrible blow. He felt his life robbed of its last sweet essence. By that one act, Gonch had in a flash lost the right to trust and friendship and now in Kutnar's eyes he

was a loathsome, detestable thing, more so than the meanest of his fellows.

Gonch was quick to see the change in the youth's feelings toward him but he was growing careless with rising fortune and felt no need of making further effort to mask his true nature. "Flesh is flesh," he leered in the boy's face when the horrible orgie was over. "You will soon learn that man's flesh is as good or better than any other."

Kutnar spat in disgust. "When am I to leave here?" he cried. "I hate these men and—and now I hate you."

"Leave here?" sneered Gonch. "Impossible. I could not bear such a calamity. My people dote upon you. I am quite sure that they could not live without their youthful hunter."

This last sentence contained much truth. The Muskman felt its humor and he chuckled at his own wit; but the boy only glared.

"Your people? Then this is what you have brought me to. These wretches are the fine people of the southland. Tell me, filthy beast-man, why am I here?"

Kutnar held his sling threateningly. He was furious. The cave-men were now gathering around the pair. "Be quiet, boy," the Muskman warned in a low voice. "A word from me and the flesh will be torn from your body. You hate me. Good; but take care."

That was all but in that short time, the boy in some ways had become a man. He said no more,

only hung his head, crushed and humiliated with disappointment and revulsion of feeling. It was the sudden shattering of an ideal. Now he had no friends, for the one man whom he had trusted and befriended was a cannibal and traitor doubly vile. He returned to Castillo with the others and chose a spot by the fire as far removed from Gonch as possible and sat there staring vacantly into the blaze. The shades of night settled over the mountain and still he sat motionless, oblivious to what was going on about him. One by one the cave-men retired to Castillo's yawning entrance and curled up in their hide-wrappings to secure their night's rest. All were gone but two—the boy and Gonch.

"You who perform one task so well, can bear another," the Muskman sneered. "Watch the fire, and watch it well until the light returns. Do not fall asleep or it will be the worse for you."

These were Gonch's parting instructions and then he too lay down in the cave-entrance. Kutnar smiled bitterly. Another task was now added to his already overburdened shoulders; one that no man dared neglect. Without fire, life would have been impossible during the cold season. The roaring blaze warmed and cheered many a body which without it would have succumbed sooner or later to rheumatism, influenza or other virulent disease. Fire, a most difficult thing to create, was rarely permitted to die out. The Castellans took turns watching and feeding it day and night. Woe to him

who neglected his all-important task, a task that Kutnar was now obliged to assume.

But he neither rebelled nor complained. He was but a boy long accustomed to obey and respect his elders; and ingrained habits are slow to change. And yet as he gazed silently at the lashing flames and curling smoke-wreaths, his mind was experiencing one of those tremendous upheavals that, like the volcano or hurricane, preface their fury with outward calm. Kutnar was deadly calm. His thoughts surging one upon another were those of a sane and sober mind. But with all his illusions shattered, the child was become a man. He now knew that all of the southland wonders were the Muskman's lies. There were no fine flints, no weapon-making; the men might have been wolves except for their human forms which however made their wretchedness and cannibalism even more beast-like in his eyes. So low had they fallen that they must needs depend upon himself, a mere boy, to feed them; but most dreadful of all was the knowledge that his best friend had sunken lower than any of them and had betrayed him from first to last.

As he watched the dancing firelight, bestirring himself at intervals to pile on fresh wood, the boy's mind was saying, "I must do my best to be useful and earn the right to live. Brighter days are in store for me if only I will be patient and wait for them" and beneath this rumbled the voice of the man-mind, low and distant but ever coming nearer

and nearer: "I despise these men; but he who has deceived me, I hate and loathe. Filthy beast-man whom I once called friend, the time will come when you must pay the penalty. When the sling sends you my message; listen to the stone-hiss, 'Greetings from my master, son of the Mammoth Man. He bids me fly straight and fast, bearing to you his traitor-friend the reward that you have so nobly earned—death.' "

XIX

IT was not many days before Gonch found himself subjected to increased pressure. The grim hetman fretted and chafed incessantly simply because the Lion Man failed to appear. With all his sharpness, Gonch had merely relieved one bad situation by creating another. He was congratulating himself for his shrewdness in diverting Totan's channel of wrath to someone other than himself, but now that the Lion Man had become rooted in the hetman's mind, Gonch found himself worse off than ever. Pic did not appear. There were no others worth while to soothe Totan's pugnacious spirit, so he centered the burden of his rancor upon Gonch.

"Time passes and still your Lion Man does not come," he fumed. "I believe you lie when you say he will."

"And I still say so," replied the Muskman although in a less cocksure manner than formerly, for he was beginning to feel grave doubts. "But the lad; does he not please you? Never have we fared so well as since he came here."

Totan gave his henchman a sour look. "Lad? Ugh; he does better than all the rest of you put together. But bah! why speak of him? I want



THE HETMAN LOSES PATIENCE

none but his father the Lion Man, Weapon Maker or whatever else you choose to call him. I hunger to crush his bones."

Gonch sensed the approaching storm. He grasped desperately at a straw. "Weapon Maker?" he whispered looking carefully around him as though he were about to impart some deep-dyed mystery. "You ask for him who makes the fine blades? Pst! he is here."

"The Lion Man?" roared Totan, leaping to his feet and snatching at his club. "Where?"

"Son of the Lion Man, you mean," corrected Gonch. "It is my little secret. He makes the fine weapons even better than his father. What a prize; a hunter and flint-worker, all in one."

"Agh! the boy again," howled the hetman in a great rage and then his curiosity got the better of him as Gonch hoped and half expected it would. "The boy a flint-worker?" he sneered. "This is another of your lies; but you have said it and I will know the truth, even if I have to eat it out of you."

"Try him," said the Muskman much relieved that he had so neatly turned the trend of conversation. "I said and proved that he was the equal of our best hunters. I say and will prove that he is a skilled flint-worker. To-morrow he will begin making the fine blades."

"And a sorry day it will be for you if he fails," snarled the giant enraged at being so easily diverted from the main idea and yet not having wit enough to stick to it.

And so the storm-clouds lifted temporarily, giving Gonch a chance to keep his hide on him and him in it. He sought Kutnar and said, "Those who do nothing, shall eat nothing. You idle too much. Now is the time for you to hammer and finish the fine flint weapons. You know how the work is done. We must have blades. Make them."

And so more was required of him. Kutnar's eyes glittered as he answered, "But there is no flint here. Blades cannot be made from nothing. Find me flint-lumps if you must have the tools."

"Find them yourself," snapped the Muskman irritated by the boy's reply. "If you fail, I will see that you get no food."

So Kutnar did as he was bidden or tried to at least. It was past mid-day and he would have welcomed a rest after his morning's hunting trip. The blood was surging to his temples but the boy-mind still ruled and so he went down to the river bank to search the gravels for material on which to work. But he found only disappointment, for the waters were ice-bound, and even if flint-lumps were there, he could not reach them. He returned to Castillo just before nightfall, and of course he returned empty-handed. Gonch scolded him soundly, even as he trembled for his own safety at thought of what the morrow might bring when Totan learned of his failure. He jerked the boar-hide loose that Kutnar wore about his body and hissed, "No food nor warmth either for him who does nothing. You shall pay by taking a turn at fire-watching to-night."

To-morrow will be your last chance. The blades we will and must have." He would have said more but as he looked about him, he saw the giant hetman watching and beckoning him to come that way. Gonch went reluctantly, for he had a fair idea of what was in the chieftain's mind.

"The boy pays small attention to your orders," Totan said grimly when the two were together. "I believe that you have grown careless. He is a flint-worker but he works no flints. No doubt you lie when you say he does."

"Blades cannot be made from nothing," was the answer. "The lad cannot find the flint on which to work."

This was in part, repeating Kutnar's own words and the hetman's reply was curiously enough word for word the same as Gonch had given the boy.

"Find them yourself," was his gruff response. "I will have no excuses. The blades must be made or no one knows whom we will be eating next." He leered so affectionately at Gonch that the latter felt cold chills creeping up his spine. He determined for his own health he would accompany Kutnar on the morrow and help him find the flint-lumps. He could not hold Totan off forever, for the latter was already nearing the limit of his patience. "If Pic would only come, my troubles would be ended," he thought. "These two giants would destroy each other, leaving me master beyond dispute."

But Pic had not yet arrived and there seemed

small chance of his doing so in time to improve the situation. "To-morrow I will help the boy find the flint-lumps," he assured his chief. "He dare not fail me this time. I will not let him out of my sight until he secures the material and begins to make the blades."

Before curling up in his hide-wrapping, he gave Kutnar his parting instructions: "Watch the fire to-night. In the morning, you will join the hunters in search of game. This done, we will go forth together and find the flint-lumps. Before sunset you must be at work making blades. Then, if you have done well, another shall have a turn at fire-watching and you may rest." With that, he went his way.

Kutnar listened but said nothing. When he could sit alone and gaze into the firelight, it was the nascent man-mind that now whispered to him: "Drudgery and death will be yours if you stay here. Why serve them you despise and him you loathe? Up, boy, and prove yourself a worthy son of the Mammoth Man. Your friends are rushing to your aid. Far in the distance behind the screening haze, I see the form of a huge beast with long, gleaming tusks, ploughing toward you through the drifts. A mighty man sits astride his neck and a stout shaggy animal trots by his side. Awake and bite back at these yapping wolves or remain a slave and see no more of father and people and your friends the Hairy Elephant and Woolly Rhinoceros."

XX

WHEN Gonch arose next morning, he found Kutnar piling fresh wood upon the cave-hearth fire. The boy had been awake all night, nevertheless he appeared in good spirits. For some reason or other this angered the Muskman and he curtly ordered Kutnar to make ready for the morning hunt. This in itself was a flagrant violation of the Castilian code. Night fire-tenders were always permitted a rest after their labors while others attended to the next morning's food-gathering. But this was an exceptional case. Gonch found the hetman's brow-beating too much to bear and so he passed the burden with his spite added, on to the boy.

And still Kutnar did not complain but made ready as he was told. It would appear that he had resigned himself to the position of menial and camp drudge and would perform any work allotted him. So it seemed, judging by his actions; but Gonch was keen enough to see that the boy's manner was not quite the same. He appeared to have changed over night. The change was in the look of his eyes. Gonch recalled that same look in the eyes of a wounded wolf he had once cornered. The beast had sprung upon him and bitten him severely as he

approached to club it to death. The comparison might be a product of his imagination, but Gonch deemed it wise to take no chances. He would watch the boy and be on his guard, for there was no knowing what Kutnar might do if he once made up his mind to do it. The main thing to guard against was the sling. If the boy ever took a notion in his head to attack anyone with it, no doubt he would prove a dangerous customer. "A deadly toy," was Gonch's opinion of it. "I will keep an eye on the lad and see that he does not get a chance to use it."

Kutnar took his place as usual in the morning hunt and Gonch accompanied him. No matter where they tramped; through snow-drifts and over hill and dale, whenever the boy looked behind him, there was the Muskman standing close at his elbow.

It was past mid-day when the party returned to Castillo. Kutnar had no sooner thrown himself down by the fire to rest than the Muskman curtly informed him it was time to descend to the bank of the River Pas and search for flint-lumps. Without a word, the boy rose obediently to his feet. Gonch again observed the strange hunted look of those eyes; also the jaws were set tightly together. It was on his mind to take several of the cave-men along too, for there was greater safety in numbers, but he put this notion scornfully aside. "What a fool I am to fear him and his fling-string," he reflected. "A mere lad who knows better than to pit himself against a man"; but he was careful just the

same and kept his ax in readiness to strike down the lad if he made a move to use the sling girt about his loins.

In this manner they descended to the river bank. Then began the search for flint-lumps, but in spite of their diligence, they had no success. With the passing of time, Gonch grew more and more desperate as he thought of the trip back to Castillo where he must face the hetman empty-handed. "Look closer, boy," he snarled. "If you fail, there will be neither food nor rest for you to-night when we return."

Kutnar looked furtively about him, not toward the ground but at the distant mountain of Castillo, the snow-covered lowlands and up and down the ice-bound stream. His hands fumbled with the rawhide thong tied about his waist. In an instant the Muskman's ax flashed threateningly above his head.

"And so the little boy would play with his fling-string," sounded Gonch's taunting voice followed by a fierce command: "Quick, give it to me or I will kill you." Kutnar's nostrils swelled and his face reddened but there seemed no help for him. He loosened the sling from his body and cast it at the Muskman's feet. At sight of the youth now completely disarmed and at his mercy, Gonch laughed a loud brutal laugh charged with cruelty and malice. "You hate me," he hissed; "but your hatred is a mere pebble beside yonder mountain

compared with what I feel toward you. Do you know why?"

Kutnar made no answer; merely glared at his tormentor with hunted eyes.

"Because you are the whelp of the Mammoth Man," snarled Gonch. "He, your father, I hate even worse than I hate you. You do not know why."

Again no answer; Kutnar only glared.

"Because he has the heart of a woman in his great lion body," Gonch raved on vindictively. "Because he is a friend of beasts and would withhold them from the paunches of hungry men; because he would make weaklings of hunters and warriors; and because of the strength in his lion body which prevented my bringing him here a slave."

Kutnar's chest rose and fell with his hard breathing. He bit his lips until the blood came; but still he said nothing.

"I was but a wolf running amuck in his flock," the Muskman sneered. "A rock fell from the cliff and nearly destroyed the Mammoth and Rhinoceros. Who pushed it down? I. A man set upon the Mammoth caught fast in the mire and would have destroyed him, had it not been for the meddling Rhinoceros. Who was that man? I. Who stole the Lion Man's cub when all chance of securing the Lion Man himself was gone? I. Do you hear me, whelp? It was I."

The boy's eyes were now blazing like coals of fire. His face had become livid. Gonch noted the effect

of his cruel mockery and he gloated over it even as he gloried in the boy's helplessness.

"We were such dear good friends," he scoffed. "I loved you, my comrade, as a hyena loves a bone. We fled to the southland together; you and I. Your father pursued us. He rode upon the Mammoth and soon we were overtaken. I thought it unwise for you to know who was pursuing us, for your father was angry and would have spoiled all. We lay hidden in the bushes. Another moment and you would have learned the truth, had not someone struck you from behind. Who struck that blow? A lion? No. It was——"

"You!" screamed Kutnar, and like a flash, he launched himself at his tormentor's throat.

So sudden and unexpected was the attack that Gonch's weapon was stricken from his hand. Now he too was unarmed. Over and over they rolled in the snow; first the man, then the boy uppermost, clawing and biting like wildcats and without apparent advantage to either. Gonch was howling with fury but Kutnar fought silently like a weasel and his hands ever worked for a weasel hold on his foeman's throat. Rough and tumble, kick, strike, gouge; they struggled with all the strength and fury of madmen. For an instant they separated and each stood upon his feet. Gonch sprang to recover his ax but Kutnar frustrated this attempt with a quick leap that bore his detested enemy to the ground. The Muskman's guard was open and Kutnar found the opportunity which he had long

sought. Both hands clutched the Castellan's throat and clung there like death.

Over and over they rolled again. Gonch's cries were now screams of pain and rapidly losing force, even as his struggles to free his neck from that tearing, strangling clutch, became feebler and feebler. Kutnar felt his foe weakening; he gripped the tighter. Gonch's body jerked convulsively, the blood trickled from his nostrils, then he relaxed and lay still. Kutnar released his hold and stood erect. The Muskman never moved. "Men will soon know of this," the boy muttered; but there was no need of their knowing it too soon, so he seized the body by the shoulders and dragged it out of sight among some neighboring bushes. This done, he recovered his sling, also not forgetting to appropriate the Muskman's fine flint-ax for his own use; then he was ready to proceed.

The die was cast and now there could be no turning back. Sooner or later, the man-pack would be after him. "To be caught is to be killed and to be killed is to be eaten," he thought and so he made ready to escape with all speed. Which way? There was the broad highway eastward across the windswept snow-plain. It was the shortest route back to home and friends. He gazed longingly in that direction then shook his head. An endless journey in the dead of winter; the attempt would be madness. He could do it after the first spring thaw but not now. There was no help for it; the path pointing to the east meant cold, sickness and

death. He turned to the south. There lay the mountains full of hiding places and caves no doubt where he might live protected from the elements. Food? His sling had killed for many; now it could surely kill for one. Yes, he would flee southward and take refuge among the mountains until such time as the return of mild weather would permit the long journey home.

He was making off along the line of the Pas when he thought of the Muskman. Something prompted him to look once more upon the body of his enemy and for the last time. He retraced his steps and entered the bushes. Gonch lay there upon his back. As Kutnar gazed down at him, he said in a melancholy voice: "The rogue has met his just deserts; and yet—it is hard to forget that I once looked upon him as a friend."

He kneeled over the body and laid one ear against the chest. "Can it be that he is still alive?" he asked himself. "The heart still beats; the flesh is warm." The thought disturbed him. He raised his ax. One blow and all doubts would be removed; then for some reason he hesitated. "He will die anyway," the boy reasoned. "It would be but striking a corpse."

"That may strike back if you do not," something within warned him and he raised his ax once more, only to lose heart when it came to actually dealing the finishing stroke. "He will surely perish of cold if nothing else," he said finally. "The night

will soon come and none can find him before morning."

That settled it. By morning, Kutnar would be well on his way and among the mountains; then he need worry no more about the Muskman, be he dead or alive.

He left his fallen enemy lying among the bushes, took one more longing look at the broad eastern path and then fled rapidly in the southern direction along the line of the River Pas.

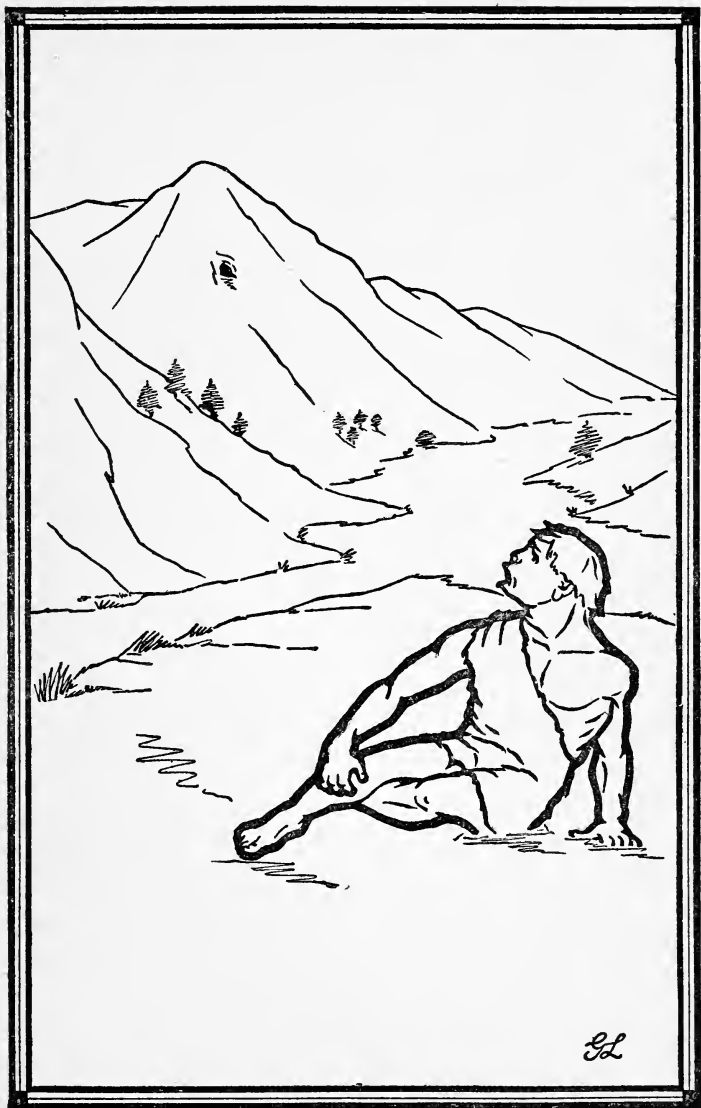
XXI

GONCH was not dead although a few moments more of Kutnar's throttling grip would have made him so beyond question.

Some men are hard to kill. Gonch was of that kind. Even as he lay, to all appearances, stiff and stark, the life-blaze flickered feebly, gathered fresh strength and flared up. His chest heaved, he uttered a deep sigh, then groaned and opened his eyes.

For a moment he was dazed by the position in which he found himself. He lay sprawling in the snow among the bushes, staring at the sky. Far in the distance, he could see the peak of Castillo. The sun setting behind the mountain-top, crowned it with a rubescent halo. The day was nearing its close.

Gonch gnashed his teeth with terrible rage as he remembered why it was he lay there. He, warrior and second man of the Castillan tribe, had been bested by a boy. His humiliation was beyond power to describe. His hate and fury were even worse. He would have given his last drop of life-blood for a chance to grapple again with Kutnar but this opportunity was denied him, for the lad was gone.



"GONCH RECOVERED BY DEGREES"

Gonch recovered by degrees. He lifted his head and shoulders, supporting himself in a couchant position upon his elbows. There he rested for a time gathering renewed vigor from the fresh air with which he now filled his lungs. He raised himself to a sitting position. The wind sweeping down upon him from the northeast was biting cold. He shivered. "I will surely die if I stay here much longer," he thought as he observed the sky's fading light. He must get back to Castillo somehow and it must be done soon, before sundown. The cave-men might find him, true enough but not before morning. By that time he would be frozen solid and past mentioning. He could almost feel the rending teeth as his mates ripped the flesh from his bones. "Not that—not that!" he whined in an agony of terror. The fear of being eaten gave him strength. He grit his teeth in desperation and was soon crawling through the snow on his hands and knees toward the distant mountain.

It was black dark and the cave-men were snoring out their sleep when the night fire watcher heard cries coming from far down the mountain side. He listened and recognized them as those of a human being, so he went down and found the Muskman crawling upward his laborious way. With the man's aid, Gonch was brought to the top where he fell exhausted beside the fire. This aroused some of the sleepers and they issued from the cave-entrance to learn what was the matter. At sight of their distressed comrade, they made so much ado

that soon the whole tribe was wide awake and stirring. The giant hetman came forth and prodded Gonch with his foot. "You are late," he grumbled and then looked all about him. "Where is the boy? He went with you. Where is he now?"

"Gone," the Muskman moaned feebly.

"Gone?" Totan observed his henchman's torn throat. He howled vindictively as the truth dawned upon him. "And your ax; it too seems to have disappeared. Did boy and ax go together?"

It was in Gonch's mind to tell a falsehood ascribing his condition to the fury of some fierce beast, but he was too exhausted to think of aught but Kutnar's escape and the necessity for immediate pursuit. "Yes," he groaned. "The boy struck me down and escaped. He must be followed and brought back."

The hetman scowled and grinned with cruel malice. "In good time," he sneered. "He who allows himself to be mauled by a boy, may not give commands. We are not bats to fly around in the darkness and bump our heads to no purpose. The boy will not have gone far. At the first sign of light, we will feast and be on our way to find him."

"Feast?" inquired one of the men. "On what?"

"This," replied the hetman digging his toes into Gonch's ribs. "He promised to bring us the Mammoth Man and failed. He has lost us our most expert hunter. Empty boasts are fit only to fill empty stomachs. Tell me, hungry men, what is the penalty?"

"Death," growled a voice.

"Death," echoed from four-score pairs of lungs, and there ensued a great rattling of clubs. The hetman stilled the tumult with a wave of his hand.

"Tut, tut," he protested good-naturedly. "The poltroon is all but dead now. In the morning, I will give you a rare treat—fresh meat with the blood still dripping from it. We will roast him alive."

Gonch heard and sickened with deadly fear, but he retained wit enough to lie quiet and appear as dead as possible. Totan rolled him over with his foot and peered into his face. The face was that of a corpse. It looked as though the hetman's little joke would be spoiled long before sunrise. He left the body lying there and returned to the cave-entrance. The others followed and soon all were settled down and asleep once more. Apparently Gonch's lucky star had set for the last time, then something happened to send it soaring to the zenith with renewed brilliancy.

One man remained by the fire as a sentinel to watch and feed the blaze. Had the Muskman made an effort to escape, this man if wide awake would have noticed it and given the alarm. However, he fell asleep after a time as was evidenced by his attitude and the sound of his loud breathing.

Gonch may have been more dead than alive, but the fear of what morning meant for him was the best tonic in the world for his ailment. Almost imperceptibly inch by inch he shifted his body away from the fire to the coping of the ledge and lowered him-

self noiselessly down. Once out of sight of wakeful eyes, he crept around the mountain beyond hearing distance of Castillo and climbed upward. No one would expect him to venture in that direction; therefore he chose to perform the unexpected. Up, up he crawled through the darkness, regardless of the pain and weariness his efforts cost him. Time was precious, for the fire-tender might awake at any moment and give the alarm.

Gonch reached the mountain crest and lay gasping amid piles of rubble and jagged boulders. There were plenty of places to hide and as he was nigh fainting with exhaustion, he chose the remotest recess available and secured himself snugly within it. In a few moments he was sound asleep.

XXII

AFTER disposing of Gonch, Kutnar fled as fast as he could along the Pas. Near the west shore of the river, the ice would bear his weight and so he kept to that in preference to the high bank where his footprints in the snow might be plainly seen. The ice left little or no trail.

He had beaten the Muskman in a fair hand-to-hand combat. The whole pack would soon be after him and yet he felt not at all afraid. Rather his sensations were those of buoyant self-reliance. He had vanquished a full-grown and seasoned warrior; something of an accomplishment for a sixteen year old lad. Such a feat gave him confidence in himself. Kutnar was not yet fully trained to the flint-ax; the sling was his weapon. A stern chase would afford him plenty of chance to use it. He had slain the young Castellan throwing champion with it and might repeat the performance if pressed too closely.

He was free. "Why did I not think to run away before?" he wondered, not realizing that a marked change had come over him and made him in many respects a man.

All this time he was hurrying southward along the Pas. The mountain of Castillo still hovered

upon his right flank. He ran abreast of its southern exposure and had turned his head as though to look upon it for the last time before he sped onward, when he caught sight of a dark spot high upon its side. The spot was a cave.

Kutnar stopped and gazed thoughtfully at this cave. It was but a short distance from Castillo and on the same mountain. Its proximity to the stronghold of his enemies was what made him view it with such interest. Who would think of looking for him there? Surely not Totan and his band. They would expect the runaway to flee from them much farther than that. What a lark! His enemies would search far and wide while he whom they sought lay hidden almost within sight of their own haunt. Then, too, he was jaded and needed rest. His previous night had been spent fire-tending and he had passed a strenuous day. All of these considerations tempted him. He left the river and turned to the distant slope treading only on bare ground and stones where possible, so as to leave no snow-tracks. After a long hard climb, he reached his goal and found only a bitter disappointment awaiting him. It was not a real cave but a grotto or shallow nook scooped from the rock. He could see every inch of the interior as he stood at the entrance but no living thing was there. As a hiding place, it had no possibilities. Kutnar now observed a hole in its floor. "A fox's den," he thought. "I am glad that the place is of use to someone." He knelt over the hole and peered in. A draught of air blew

in his face. He coughed and the sound was repeated in a distant echo. This was both surprising and interesting. The hole was barely large enough to admit his body but there might be a larger cavity beneath. Not a fox's den nor the home of any animal; he learned this by sniffing carefully about the cavity. Where did it lead? He put his feet in the hole and slid half-way in. It was a tube of solid rock. He could feel its sides with his toes but no bottom. He lowered himself further until head and all were in and still he found no place to set his feet. He let himself down another yard and it was just the same. "There must be an end sometime," he thought as he continued to work his way downward. The descent was a simple matter, for the tube now jogged slightly this way and that, making it easy for him to cling to its sides with his hands and feet. The air was warmer than that outside; although humid and musty, it could be breathed.

The tube began to widen. The slight noise made by his feet sliding over the rock, sounded loud and distinct. The passage gradually angled more to the horizontal. It widened still more and the boy was able to turn and glance behind him. All was dark but in some places the shadows were darker than others. Kutnar heard squeaks and the flapping of bat wings. Evidently the passage-way opened into a large room.

By this time, Kutnar felt keenly elated over his discovery. As a hiding place, the grotto offered

great possibilities after all; not the grotto itself but the subterranean vault whose only means of access was the stone tube. The casual observer who could see every corner of the shallow cave, would not think of looking for a cavity beneath. Kutnar decided to stay in the vault for a time to hide and rest. There was the hole in the floor of the grotto however and it would be well to conceal that or someone might learn of the underground room as he had done. He crawled back through the tube the way he had come and stood once more in the open air.

It was now quite dark; the deep twilight preceding dusk, for night had settled over the mountain while Kutnar was exploring the cavity and where it led. There were many rocks piled below the cave-threshold and he hunted about until he found one of the right shape and size. He tried this over the vent and it fitted nicely, effectively concealing the opening in the floor. Anyone standing at the threshold would now gaze upon a bare interior; bare of aught but a single stone.

"Ha-a-a, yum!" Kutnar yawned loudly and stretched his limbs. Now that the day's excitement was over and he had time for relaxation, a wave of drowsiness swept over him. He would sleep in the grotto, trusting to his sixth or slumber guarding sense to warn him of imminent danger. As a last resort, he could lower his body into the tube, set the stone above his head and hide as long as he pleased in the vault beneath.

He was preparing to lie down upon the floor of

the grotto when he heard something that brought him to his feet in quick time. He tiptoed to the threshold and saw a dark figure ascending the slope. The figure was coming toward him. It moved in an erect position but it seemed too large and clumsy to be a man. It came nearer and although but an ebon patch on a sable background, Kutnar recognized it as a bear and a large one. What brought the creature there? Either the grotto was its permanent home or it was seeking merely a night's lodging. Kutnar could not now safely vacate the premises, even had he chosen to do so. He tiptoed back to the grotto and moved the stone aside from the cavity, then lowered his body down, holding the stone in both hands high above his head as he descended. Arms and hands sank from sight and the stone settled over the hole. To all appearances, the grotto was now vacant.

Kutnar continued his downward journey until he reached the large room. Here he sat listening but could hear no sounds to indicate what might be transpiring above. Had the bear come and gone or was he now lying upon the floor of the grotto making ready to sleep? Kutnar thought it unnecessary for him to go up and find out. There was his own night's rest to consider, so he lay down and pillowed his head upon his arm. He fell asleep without knowing when but awoke sooner than he would have wished because of the damp mustiness which oppressed his lungs. Fresh air, that was what he wanted, so he sought the passage-way and

wriggled through it as noiselessly as a snake. On arriving at the top, he sought and found the stone and thrust it aside, inch by inch. After staying there for some time with his face as close to the opening as he dared, refreshing himself with deep breaths of outside air, he reset the stone and returned to finish his nap. He repeated this performance several times, not without considerable risk, for the bear was asleep in the cave-entrance as he knew from the sound of its breathing. "Even a cave-beast and a man can get along together sleeping in the same den," he chuckled as he made his fourth upward trip. As he neared the outlet of the tube, he saw faint rays of light and knew that morning was near at hand. When he had moved the stone partly aside, he set his ear at the opening but heard no sounds. It would seem that his visitor had awakened and taken his leave. However, there was only one way to be sure of this. That was to see it with his own eyes. Slowly, noiselessly he shifted the stone farther and farther away until the opening was entirely clear, then his head arose almost imperceptibly through the tube and above the level of the cave-floor, giving him a view of the entrance and the grey world beyond.

XXIII

THE valley of the Ebro may have been perfectly satisfactory to the Mammoth and Rhinoceros but as regards climate, it did not suit Pic, for he possessed no hide garment to cover his nakedness. Winter was in full swing and the cold wind so chilled his body that he was driven to descend from the Mammoth's neck and walk to keep warm. Pic was not a fast walker and the snowdrifts made it worse. It was an unfortunate situation for it reduced very considerably the distance which the trio might have traveled in a day. Then more snow fell and the drifts became so deep that Pic could scarcely make any progress at all. It was not surprising that he tired rapidly and was soon compelled to remount the Mammoth's neck. This rested him and enabled the party to proceed at a fast gait but it was not long before the cold wind whistling about his ears, drove him to the ground again. There, as before, he floundered through the drifts and soon exhausted himself. All the time, he scolded and fretted because he and his associates were not making more progress. Hairi and Wulli considered his irritation uncalled for. It was his fault not theirs that they failed to do better. "You ought to grow more hair," grumbled the Mammoth

and this made Pic so peevish, he would not speak to his friends for a time. The two animals in their turn, now became moody and irritable. Taken altogether they and Pic were not getting along very well and felt all the more vexed with each other for that very reason.

Then came a gale sweeping down upon them from the west to make matters worse. The wind blew clouds of fine snow-dust into their faces, lodging and accumulating there until the Mammoth and Rhinoceros were disguised in great white masks. This did not bother them in the least. Having no vanity as to their personal appearance and being warmly clad, they felt quite cozy and comfortable.

Pic's case was different. The storm multiplied his worry and discomfort. The wind numbed his body. He was almost smothered and blinded by the fine sleet which drove into his mouth and eyes. Once more he slid down from the Mammoth's neck and labored forward on foot. Finally he stopped. "I can go no farther," he said. "Without warmth and rest, I will die. I fear that you must leave me."

Both animals halted. The situation had grown acute. "Die? Leave you?" said the Mammoth. "We will wait while you warm and rest yourself."

Pic made a wry face. "More easily said than done. Even a hare would find no shelter here."

"But the mountains," Hairi suggested. "There must be a hole in them somewhere."

Up to this time, the party had seen no caves. Pic would have spent every night in one, were there

caves to be had. So far he had not noticed one; and many miles had by this time been traveled along the southern flank of the Cantabrian range. Hairi was right. Lucky for Pic, his good-fortune had not entirely deserted him, for as he looked toward the mountain through the blinding snow-dust, he saw a dark spot high upon its side. One glimpse was enough; the dark spot was a cave and he joyfully made known the news to his companions.

All smiled once more. It was agreed that their onward march would be halted temporarily, giving Pic a chance to take refuge in the cave and rest until the storm was over. Meanwhile, the two animals would wait in the lee of a rock-shelter which could be seen a half mile or so beyond the cave. When the weather cleared, Pic would rejoin his friends and they would continue as before. With this understanding, they separated. Pic made for the mountain side, while Hairi and Wulli moved off toward the rock-shelter.

Pic climbed up to the cave, but before intruding he made a careful preliminary inspection. Possession was nine points of law in such cases; the tenth point was getting possession. "Cave-jumping" was an offense meriting capital punishment. There could be no mercy shown one who attempted to deprive another of his home. This applied to men's dealings with beasts as well as with each other. Men and beasts both fancied the same sort of dwelling, and in the winter time particularly there was constant rivalry between them for the possession of

desirable caves. Some were more desirable than others, being furnished with more than one entrance or having advantages of plumbing and ventilation; such as cool drinking water trickling through the ceiling, or openings in the roof to permit the escape of smoke and foul air. Most of them had thresholds or sun-rooms, where the tenant might loll outside and enjoy natural light and warmth. Neither man nor flesh-eating beasts knew how to build houses, and so they made use of the best that Nature gave them.

Pic knew he had no business in that cave if some one were already there, but his needs were great and he intended to occupy it no matter who disputed him. He stepped boldly within.

Although vacant, the place did not lack an owner. It bore a pungent animal odor and that odor was fairly fresh. The occupant had been there recently and gone away. "Probably I will have gone away, too, by the time he returns," thought Pic. The storm was already abating and it would not be long before he could resume his journey. Before selecting a comfortable spot to lie down and rest, he set about to learn what variety of animal he might have to deal with, should it return. His nose informed him that the odor was not that of a lion or any other cat-like animal. That was good, for they were his most formidable enemies. Wolf or hyena? No; then it must be a bear. Yes, it was a bear! Now his anxiety was relieved. Such animals varied

greatly in size and fierceness, but most of them were comparatively harmless if let alone.

Pic lay down in the cave-entrance where wind and sleet could not reach him and laughed at the storm outside. He could see the broad snow-covered expanse of country below him. The Mammoth and Rhinoceros had disappeared. A large boulder hung at the verge of the cave-threshold and obstructed his view in that direction. It also prevented his seeing what might be coming toward him up the mountain side. Not until he heard the crunch, crunch of something breaking through the snow-crust; did he realize that he was about to have a visitor. He sprang to his feet, glided to the boulder and peered over, then dropped behind it again for fear of being observed.

A burly animal was ascending to the cave. It was heavily furred and round like a big ball. A bear; Pic had interpreted the odor rightly, but he had not bargained for one as large as this. It was neither the black nor brown species, but a huge brute that no man, however strong and brave, would care to meddle with—the giant Cave Bear.

The beast came lumbering up the steep mountain side, occasionally stopping to gaze westward. At such times it growled. Probably it had seen the Mammoth and Rhinoceros pass by and decided that its den needed watching.

Pic gripped his ax tightly, for he knew this was an occasion to try any bear's temper. The one coming toward him appeared big enough to do



"THE CAVE BEAR LOOKED UP AND GROWLED"

anything. He would put up a good fight without question, in the defense of his home. The man looked at his ax-blade and shook his head. Even its keen edge would find difficulty in reaching a vital spot through that heavy fur. One blow, possibly two, were all he could expect to deliver before the huge beast would close in. Once those mighty paws were around his body it would go hard with him.

The beast halted directly beneath the boulder behind which the man lay hidden. Should anything disturb that boulder and cause it to fall, so much the worse for Mr. Bear. Pic braced his feet against the projections of the ledge surface behind him and set his shoulders against the stone. One mighty heave loosened it from its setting. The Cave Bear looked up and growled. The motion of the stone and the slight noise above aroused his suspicions. Pic put forth every ounce of his great strength in a second effort. The boulder swayed, then toppled over. The beast saw it coming and made a frantic attempt to save himself. Too late! The huge stone descended upon him with a crash and the two went rolling and tumbling together down the mountain side, with Pic bounding after them, ax in hand, to deal the finishing blow.

But there was no need to complete the damage that the stone had begun. When Pic arrived at the foot of the declivity he found a perfectly dead bear. The crushing weight of the boulder and the long

battering journey down the steep incline had made an end of the beast for all time.

It was a magnificent animal, bulging with winter fat and the finest of heavy fur. Pic looked down upon it and sighed. Bears in general interested him and appealed to his gentler nature; bluff and ungainly and so different from skulking flesh-eaters. The beast had died without a chance to defend himself. Pic's triumph was tinged with profound regret; but one or the other of them had to die, he consoled himself, and he preferred the bear to be that one. He marvelled at the beast's vast proportions; its thick hams and mighty paws; then his attention was drawn to the fur. "A wonderful coat," he said, as he kneeled and ran his fingers through it. "Would that I had one like it to keep out the cold."

"It is yours; take it," something within him answered and the idea once born, soon became a reality. In a trice, his ax-blade was unbound from its wooden handle and became a knife. With this, Pic began to skin the beast, a tremendous task for a lone man with nothing but a flint tool to aid him. But the flint was sharp and the man's strength and determination carried him through. He slit the neck, chest and belly downward, then the forepaws, and after much cutting and tugging pulled the complete hide from the carcass. The hind legs were uncovered without slitting, leaving those parts of the skin solid like a pair of boots. When the hide was completely detached inside out, Pic

turned it back the right way again and the job was done.

He remounted his ax-head, rested and refreshed himself with some flesh-strips from the carcass, then proceeded to have a try-on of his new one-piece suit. The hind legs made comfortable trousers, and the rest of it, although somewhat loose and badly hung, might have been much worse. No better garment could have been devised to keep out the cold, and that was the main idea. It had but one drawback. Pic found it a most unwieldy thing to navigate in. When he tried to walk, he did nothing but trip and stumble over his own feet. This was no more than amusing, for he was feeling warm and comfortable and ready to smile at anything. "Hairi and Wulli will be surprised when they see me in this," he laughed. "Agh! What a relief! My coat is every bit as warm as theirs. Snow, ice, cold wind; what of them? Now our way may lead to the country of the Mammoth and Rhinoceros, for all I care."

XXIV

THE Mammoth and Rhinoceros were standing near the foot of the mountain beneath an overhanging cliff. From time to time they glanced eastward as though expecting some one. The storm had moderated considerably.

"It's about time he were returning," Hairi remarked. "I hope when he does come back he will be all rested and warm. What a pity he cannot learn to fancy the cold weather as we do."

"Here he comes now," said the Rhinoceros.

Both animals possessed keen ears and noses, but their eyesight was not at all good. They saw a blurred figure coming toward them through the snow, but neither one of them could have distinguished a man from an elk at that distance. The figure moved in a most peculiar manner. It walked on its hind legs, but as it approached them the two friends saw, to their astonishment, that it was not a man.

"A bear," muttered Wulli.

"Yes, it looks like a bear," said the Mammoth; "but did you ever see one behave like that?"

The creature was in truth performing most strangely. Its movements were those of one intoxicated, a condition that neither of the pair had

ever observed in a bear or any one else, for that matter. It seemed to be having great difficulty managing its legs and feet. These tripped over and interfered with one another in an astonishing way. The big body heaved and tossed about because of its unreliable support. Finally, when several rods distant, it stumbled and fell sprawling in the snow. Hairi and Wulli looked on in amazement as the creature floundered helplessly upon its back like a turtle. After much puffing and grunting, it righted itself and again assumed an upright position.

A bear was nothing to be afraid of; so thought the Mammoth and Rhinoceros; but this one's behavior mystified them. Once on its feet again, it lurched and lumbered forward, waving both paws as if in greeting. "Hi-yo, Hairi! Hi-yo, Wulli!" it cried.

The two friends jumped. They were trembling now and too scared to move. The words and voice sounded strangely familiar. They were those of a human being, but the creature was a bear. Then more surprising still, its head fell back and a man's face appeared. The mouth was grinning as though it would split.

The Mammoth was on the point of beating a hasty retreat when Wulli suddenly squealed, "Pic! that is his face. What has become of the rest of him?"

Hairi's eyes opened wide. "Pic, sure enough.



PIC ASTONISHES HIS FRIENDS

But his body; where is that? The bear must have eaten it."

"Perhaps he ate the bear," whispered Wulli, clutching at a small ray of hope. "Let's ask him."

"Ho-ho!" laughed the unknown. "Did I frighten you? Now don't run away, Hairi, for there is nothing to worry about. Nobody has eaten anybody."

The voice was reassuring and it belonged to Pic without question. The Mammoth breathed more freely. He advanced a few steps and touched the other with the tip of his trunk. "Fur, long and thick like a bear's." He turned to the Rhinoceros and said, "I told him to do it and he has done it. But who would believe that he could grow so much hair and in so short a time?"

Sounds of muffled laughter greeted this last remark. Wulli now came forward to investigate the reason for this unseemly mirth. He sniffed at the bearskin, then suddenly backed away squealing with alarm. "Oo-wee! Blood! I smell it! Oo-wee; somebody has been killed."

The two animals might have bolted then and there, had not Pic put an end to the farce. He threw the skin from his body and it fell in a heap about his legs.

"It is I; all of me," he said. "Somebody has been killed but I was not the one. I slew the bear, otherwise he would have slain me. With my flint-blade I cut his pelt from him and now it is mine."

"And so you did not grow it," said the Mam-

moth, somewhat crestfallen. "At any rate, you did your best to do as I told you."

Wulli took an entirely different view of the matter. He could appreciate a good fighter. "Only a big man could kill such a big bear," he remarked thoughtfully.

"And a smaller bear would not have been much use to him," Hairi sagely remarked. "He could never have gotten in its skin. I say he did right."

"Right or wrong, only a good fighter could have done it," grumbled the Rhinoceros.

"And now I am clad as warmly as you are," said Pic. "It will be better for all of us, for we can travel as fast as we please. The skin will keep me warm. This makes us three instead of two Tundr-folk."

The new arrangement was a success from the very start. The bearskin had its drawbacks, but they detracted only in a small measure from the main point. Pic could not make much headway in it traveling on foot; furthermore, the Mammoth was obliged to lift him to his seat when he vainly endeavored to mount. Pic was no more able to help himself than a turkey tied up in brown paper. However, when once astride Hairi's neck, he was in the height of his glory. His new garment was impervious to wind and cold, and having nothing to do but sit and think, he felt thoroughly comfortable and contented. The two animals shared his good spirits. From then on the party got along finely and proceeded at a great rate.

The Ebro River soon appeared upon their left. It was fed by many smaller streams flowing into it from the mountains. The latter were frequently cleft by deep passes or defiles running through them from south to north. After crossing the headwaters of the Ebro the trio came in sight of another mountain pass traversed by a modest stream. This latter was partly frozen over, but the Mammoth and Rhinoceros were powerful cold-water swimmers and found little trouble in breaking their way through the ice to the opposite side. As they climbed the bank and halted to shake the water out of their shaggy coats, Pic saw before him a lofty peak in whose side, five hundred feet or more above the level on which he stood, loomed a dark spot. His trained eye immediately recognized it as a cave. It must be in or near the zone of human occupancy if what the snow-grouse had said was true. Now was the time to cut through the mountain range to the northern side.

Pic glanced at the sky. The sun was hidden in the west. Before long, all would be dark. The party must wait until morning before proceeding, and so they began to look about for a convenient spot to halt and rest. Pic resolved to spend his night in the cave, assuming it to be vacant. No fire burned upon its threshold. And yet, it might be the home of a man who could be forced to give information that might prove valuable.

The trio advanced to the mountain. It appeared near, but appearances were deceiving, and

it was quite dark when they drew up at the foot of the steep slope. Here Pic and his friends parted; the former to climb upward, the latter to proceed a short distance, browsing as they went.

Pic discovered the cave to be a small one and unoccupied. However, it had been a man's home and probably still was, for the human odor still clung to it. This was interesting and important, for it was reasonable to suppose that other human beings lived somewhere near. Pic glowed all over with the pleasure and excitement this thought aroused in him. The long climb too had warmed him, particularly as he was now attired in his bear-skin suit. The latter was cumbersome, but it would make a comfortable sleeping bag, and for that reason he had been loth to leave it behind. Before settling down upon the threshold to rest he examined the cave. There was little to see, for it was a small and simple hollow in the rock and absolutely bare except for a single flat stone lying upon the floor. Pic lay down in the cave-entrance, gathered his robe about him and was not long in drifting to the land of rest and forgetfulness.

In the morning's small hours he suddenly awakened. A low scraping noise sounded from behind him—from the floor of the cave. It continued with fits and starts. Still lying motionless, he turned his head around far enough to view the cave interior. He saw nothing there—nothing but the stone upon the floor. "Probably some small animal stirring," he thought and then—the stone moved. For a

moment he was startled, to say the least. No stone ever shifted about of itself. Something must be pushing it. He looked on dumbfounded as the stone hitched itself almost imperceptibly along the cave-floor. It appeared bewitched; and then, as he watched its strange motions while uneasiness and fear of the unknown began to creep over him, a vent appeared beneath the stone and from it issued a human hand.

A man! The mystery was now explained.

The cave-owner was concealed in a hole in the floor and was removing the stone which covered the entrance to it. Pic gathered his feet together under him, laughing softly to himself. What was there to fear from one man? He rose to a crouching position, relieving himself of the bearskin as he did so. Leaving this in a heap where he had lain, he crawled to the rear of the grotto and kneeled behind the hole in the floor, his arms outstretched—and waiting. The mysterious hands—there were now two of them—sank within the cavity and a head appeared. It rose until its eyes were above the level of the cave-floor. The eyes stared at the bearskin robe a few seconds, then the head settled down and again the hands reached upward to grasp the stone.

Quick as lightning Pic pounced upon the hands, locking both wrists in his iron grip. One heave and the unknown was plucked from his burrow like a rabbit, struggling and yelling like fury at finding himself so suddenly caught. A boy and a



"THE UNKNOWN WAS PLUCKED FROM HIS BURROW"

stout one, too, for he fought like a wildcat; but he was as helpless as a kitten in the clutches of the giant Mousterian. Pic held him fast and dragged him to the outside light. "Agh, little rascal!" he said. "And so you were the one who disturbed my night's rest."

At the sound of his voice, the boy gave a loud cry that made his captor's heart leap within his chest: "Father!"

Pic seized the lad's head between his hands and turned it so that he could peer into the face. His knees trembled, his whole body shook as with ague.

"Kutnar! Boy, is it you?"

For an instant each face stared at the other as in the waking moments of a dream. Then came light and understanding and in a moment father and son were locked tightly in each other's arms.

XXV

THE sky might have fallen in just then; anything might have happened and Pic would not have noticed it. He had no thought of aught but the one happiness that filled his heart to bursting—Kutnar was found. The pursuit through southwestern France, the long journey across the Pyrenees, the terrible cold; all were set aside and forgotten for this supreme moment—one of the most blissful he had ever known. For a time, nothing was said. Father and son sat in the cave-entrance, holding each other tightly as though they would never let go. Kutnar wept silent tears. He had played the part of a man well, but once more under the protection of his powerful sire, the reaction was overwhelming and he was but a baby boy, tired and homesick and so glad to be again with the one he loved best.

When the first joy of meeting was over, Pic drifted back to earth. "What were you doing in that hole?" he asked.

Kutnar told of his escape from Castillo and the various events leading to it. Everything bespoke the Muskman's perfidy and cruelty. Pic's face became adamant as the tale of Gonch's duplicity gradually unfolded itself. Driven to desperation,

the boy had turned upon the traitor, who must have by this time breathed his last.

"I could tell you more," said Pic, "but what you already know is enough. However, it would seem that what my boy has suffered has made him bear himself as well or better than a man. And this Gonch; are you quite sure he is dead?"

To this Kutnar replied: "No, I do not feel at all sure. When I left him lying in the bushes he still breathed. Something warned me to make an end of the ruffian, but I could not summon courage to deal the death-stroke."

Pic fidgeted uneasily. "It would have been wiser had you shown him no mercy," he said; "but you did well and I am proud of you. Now I am going to treat you to a pleasant surprise. You see, I did not come alone. The Mammoth and Rhinoceros are near at hand and waiting for us to meet them."

While saying this, he was on his feet striding to the edge of the cave-threshold with Kutnar by his side. Suddenly he uttered an imprecation and withdrew hastily into the grotto, dragging the boy with him. "Your enemies! I had forgotten them," he said. "Agh; let us hope they have not seen us."

Vain hope; he had jumped back quickly, but too late. Several groups of men stood apart from each other at the foot of the eastern and southern declivities. They were waving their clubs and pointing upward to the cave. As Pic endeavored to conceal himself, a chorus of howls floated to his ears and

he saw human figures scrambling up the steep ascent. For an instant he stood irresolute. If fight he must, he could not choose a better position than the one he now held. He was but one against many; how many? He gazed down at his enemies; here, there and everywhere. They seemed to be coming in swarms. He was a giant, past master with the flint-ax, but there were limits as to what one man could do. A sudden change came over him. His eyes blazed death. He bared his teeth and his features became those of a gorilla, tracked to his lair by the hunters and brought to bay. He beat his great chest with one clenched hand, while with the other he shook his ax at the men below him. He howled furiously. Four-score throats gave answer. The several groups of men had by this time spread out and joined each other in a long, thin line. Single figures were hastening toward the western slope to extend that line. They moved fast. The path westward was still open; soon it would be closed. There at the far end of it awaited the Mammoth and Rhinoceros. Pic was but one man pitting himself against a host. Even in his fury, he saw the better part of wisdom.

"Quick, run!" he cried, pointing to the west. "Once with our friends, we can laugh at any number of these wretches." So away they scurried along the mountain side, while their pursuers, observing them, hastened around in the same direction to cut them off.

Hairi and Wulli were standing motionless on

the western side of the mountain and to the north. They heard shouts and cries and saw two men running toward them along the heights. While they were wondering why there should be two instead of one, more men appeared, a crowd of them, also coming head on, but from farther down. What did it all mean? It would seem that the two were being set upon by many. If so, one of the fugitives must be Pic. Although uneasy and not knowing just what to expect, they kept close watch and waited until the time came to take some action.

So engrossed were they in the two men and their pursuers, they had no eyes for something far above their heads. The mountain at whose base they stood, ascended gradually to the Scarp—a precipitous rock-wall whose craggy pinnacles were lost above the morning brume. Apparently none but birds or the Chamois and Ibex among beasts could have found a footing upon its glabrous surface. But there crouched a man. None knew of his presence except himself. In the grey dawn he had crawled part way down the wall to hide where none dared come; none but one unusually sure-footed and possessed of a clear head. The man was Gonch.

He had journeyed by the early morning light from the northern side of the mountain where lived the cave-men of Castillo. A night's rest and realization that he was still alive, had given him renewed strength and courage. He had been so bold as to creep half-way down the Scarp, where even

on the smooth rock, occasional rugged projections and crevices gave him a chance to hold tightly on. He had paused to rest temporarily before descending further to where the wall leaned outward, forming a canopy or shelter over a ledge at the base of the Scarp. While resting and wondering what the day had in store for him, suddenly he espied two large animals standing motionless far down the mountain slope beneath him. He recognized them as the Mammoth and Woolly Rhinoceros. His face blanched. "How did they come there?" he muttered, gazing far and wide over the country below him. At that moment he heard distant cries and two human figures hove in sight. They were running swiftly toward him from the south and along the mountain side. More figures followed, many of them coming from farther down the slopes.

As the two figures drew nearer he recognized one of them, who led by several yards. The other who followed was a much larger man—a giant of herculean build. Gonch grasped the whole situation—at least he thought he did. Kutnar had been overtaken and was now being hotly pursued by the Castillan horde. The larger of the two men—presumably Totan—was on the verge of capturing the youth. Gonch looked on, growing more and more impatient as the latter drew nearer to his animal-friends. What ailed the hetman? Why did he not seize or strike down his quarry. "Agh, clumsy dunce," he muttered. "Soon you will be too late.

Strike, strike while you have the chance." But the supposed Totan kept on as before, following Kutnar closely, but making no effort to kill or capture him. "Pig, lubber," thought the Muskman. "Your folly will spoil everything. It is time for me to take a hand and make an end of it."

He looked about him. There were several partly detached stone-blocks within his reach. He chose the largest and pulled it loose. The rock went bounding down the face of the Scarp. He found another and another and tore them from the wall. They in their descent dislodged other blocks and the stream of them crashed and bounded down upon the Mammoth and Rhinoceros. The latter heard and saw the oncoming avalanche and immediately flew into a panic. Squealing and bellowing with fear, they turned tail and dashed away, with the storm of rocks sweeping close behind them.

Gonch laughed wolfishly as he saw them go. He had meant to destroy them, and although this plan failed, there was some satisfaction in knowing that the next best thing was accomplished. Kutnar now need expect no assistance from his friends. The man and boy slowed up as the storm of rocks swept down the mountain side. They saw the two beasts gallop madly away. On the heights lay Pic's only chance for fighting off the man-pack. It was then that he caught sight of the ledge and its protecting canopy at the base of the Scarp.

"To the rock," he panted, and Kutnar turned to the right, with Pic after him. Gonch could now

see the boy's features; mouth open and nostrils dilated with excitement and fatigue. It was then that he also got a clear view of the man; the supposed Totan. It was but a fleeting glimpse, for the man and boy had already passed from his sight beneath the shelter, but in those few moments he learned his first mistake. It was not Totan but the giant Mousterian weapon maker, the man whom Gonch feared more than anything on earth. Cold sweat exuded from every pore of the Muskmán's body. His knees shook and he clutched the rocks to save himself from falling. Then came the reaction, as he saw the Castillan horde coming rapidly toward him. Gonch wiped the cold dew from his brow and laughed hideously. He was safe from Pic's wrath and soon he would be forever rid of his most dreaded enemy. He descended the rock-wall until he stood over the ledge where he could hear, although not see, all of the tragedy about to be enacted. From this elevated position he watched the men of Castillo complete their enveloping movement. All chance of the fugitives' escape was now gone. The cave-men came swarming up the slope in a wide semi-circle, baying like hounds. Gradually the wings of the line converged as those on the two extreme ends rushed toward each other. Those in the center drew closer together and moved forward to meet the wings. Thus the human net slowly contracted upon its prey—Kutnar the boy, and Pic, hetman and weapon maker of the Moustérian.

XXVI

IN the brief interval allotted him, Pic rested and prepared himself for the impending struggle. He had one thing to encourage him; his position was admirably chosen. His assailants must meet him face to face and climb up to him. None could strike him from behind. He took his place at the edge of the rock-platform and hurled defiance at those who were advancing to destroy him. To the men of Castillo, the powerful figure and distorted features appeared as those of some unearthly being. The thought that his new-found cup of happiness might soon be snatched from his lips, had nigh driven Pic to frenzy. He was in truth a lion-man at bay, defending his cub.

Hiss! something whistled past. One of the on-rushing horde reeled and fell. Pic turned and saw the boy standing toe to the ledge-coping beside him. Already the sling was reloaded and whirling for a second cast. Hiss, again! Another man dropped back, holding his arm and screaming like a hurt beast. The stones flew fast, with few misses, for there was little need of accurate shooting at such a mass of men. Almost every shot left an enemy accounted for. The cave-men wavered as they witnessed the havoc wrought among them by



"Hiss! SOMETHING WHISTLED PAST"

the deadly sling. They might have fled, but Totan was there to drive on the laggards and strike down any man who attempted to run away. Kutnar strove to single him out, but one man was hard to distinguish in the ruck and the hetman escaped unscathed.

To Pic, his son's prowess was a revelation. Never was known such stone-throwing. "It is one thing to hit a rabbit and another to hit a man coming at you with a club," he thought. "The boy is a prodigy; may he live through this day." The men of Castillo were now closing in. Pic's powerful arm reached out and swept the lad behind him, for the time was near at hand for closer work with the flint-ax. "Well done," he muttered. "My turn now. Stand well back and give me plenty of arm room to fight these wolves. Be ready with your ax, for if I break or lose mine, I will need another."

Kutnar fell back obediently. His jaws were clenched tightly together and the grip on his ax-handle was even tighter as he awaited his chance to help when most needed.

From his rock-roost, Gonch was an awed witness of the boy's deadly marksmanship. The sling suddenly ceased its work, for now the cave-men were coming to grips with those hidden from his sight. He saw Totan detach himself from the man-pack and fall back, permitting the yelling horde to sweep past him. To the hetman's credit be it said that he who feared no man, now disdained

casting the balance of his great strength into such a one-sided contest. He stood with arms folded, watching and shouting commands, but offering to take no more active part where he considered himself so little needed. Gonch observed Totan's inaction. The time had come when he might rid himself of his two worst enemies at one fell stroke. He leaned far out from the rock-wall and howled furiously: "He has come as I promised. Up and strike before another wins the glory. It is Pic, the Lion Man himself."

The giant hetman bristled as he heard. The blood of the pit-fighter surged through his veins like molten steel. In an instant his calm was transformed into a tempest.

"The Lion Man?" he roared, tearing through the crowd to the foot of the ledge. "And so he has come to me at last. He is mine, I say, and my hand alone shall do the butchering. Stand back, every one of you. The man who raises a club to strike him, dies."

The cave-men stopped short, falling over one another in their anxiety to keep out of the hetman's way. Totan turned from them to him who stood upon the ledge. Pic had seen and heard all. He shook his ax-blade defiantly in the other's face.

"Butcher me?" he screamed. "You; ugly beast? Come and try, here where there is room for both of us."

Totan answered with a thunderous roar. He clambered up the ledge. Pic fell back several paces,

permitting his rival a foothold upon the rock-platform. This gave the hetman a moment to prepare himself—a bit of chivalry he failed to appreciate. Men who gave ground or hesitated were afraid of him—that was all. “Ar-r-r death!” he snarled like a mad tiger and flung himself upon the Mousterian champion.

“Death, so be it,” and Pic sprang forward to meet him. So fierce was the onslaught that the two giants came breast to breast before either had a chance to strike. Quick as a cat, Pic dropped his ax and grappled with his burly opponent, throwing both arms about him, bear-fashion. Finding himself at a disadvantage, Totan too let fall his weapon, roaring with rage and pain and fighting like a demon to break the other’s crushing grip.

But Pic had the under hold. With arms clamped around his rival’s midriff, and face beneath the hetman’s chin beyond the reach of tearing fingers and snapping bull-teeth, he held him as in an iron vise, from which there was no escape. The Mousterian made not a sound. He did not seem to even move, but slowly the Castillan giant’s head with nose and mouth gushing blood, fell back. A dull crunch, and before the cave-men realized what had happened, their chieftain was borne to the edge of the rock-platform and cast down among them, a bloody, lifeless thing. In a flash, Pic recovered his ax and was again upon the defensive. The rabble recoiled in terror from the fierce Lion Man. Gonch gazed down into the face of the dead Totan.



THE BATTLE OF THE GIANTS

"Good," he croaked. "Now for the other," and from his safe perch he gave frantic commands for his minions to renew the attack. "Kill the man!" he screeched. "Capture the boy alive. He is our last chance for flints and food. At them, wolves. A whole tribe will come down upon you if they escape."

Thus urged, the cave-men rallied and rushed again to the assault. The giant Mousterian's ax cut them down like straws, but the living climbed over the dead and carried the ledge by sheer weight of numbers. Pic was forced back against the wall, still fighting furiously, although bleeding from a dozen wounds. His ax was shattered, but the boy was ready with another. Pic seized and wielded it with deadly effect until it too was gone. Then grappling with the man nearest him, he fastened his teeth in his throat. The mob surged over him. Kutnar struggled desperately, but was soon overpowered.

At that moment, a loud snorting and thumping of heavy feet sounded from below, followed by squeals of rage, and two monstrous beasts came charging up the slope. "The Mammoth! the Woolly Rhinoceros!" yelled the cave-men nearest them and away they scampered, howling with fear. The alarm spread like wildfire to their companions upon the ledge and they too scattered in all directions, the rearmost barely escaping with their lives. Even Gonch shared their panic, for he made all

haste to climb higher, forgetting that he was quite safe and that no beast could reach him.

Hairi and Wulli halted at the foot of the ledge and looked about them. The Castellans had fled and in all of that gore and slaughter, only one semblance of life remained. Kutnar the boy was kneeling over a prostrate form and wiping the blood from its face. The form was that of the Mousterian weapon maker, lying where it had fallen. The Castellan jackals had borne down Pic the Lion by their overwhelming numbers, but were now in their turn fleeing in disorder along the mountain side. It had devolved upon the Mammoth and Rhinoceros to rush to their friends' assistance and strike the decisive blow, thereby terminating this most desperate of unequal conflicts—the bloody battle of the Scarp.

XXVII

IT had been a hard, wearisome charge up the steep mountain slope. Hairi and Wulli wondered how they ever summoned courage to do it. They had never done such a thing before. But the present conditions were extraordinary. Pic, their dearest friend, was being set upon by the man-pack and there was no other way to help him. They had returned after their first fright, and hearing the voice of battle about them, had hurried to the rescue. To their horror, they found the ledge a shambles reeking with blood and death. Pic was not there. They feared they had come too late. Then both jumped back in surprise, for Kutnar was looking down upon them. They recognized him at once.

"You here?" Wulli gasped. "I am so glad. We have found you at last."

"I, too, am glad," said the Mammoth. "We have come far to find you. But why should these men destroy each other? I do not see Pic and am so afraid. Where is he?"

Kutnar stared at the huge beast like one not in his right mind. He pointed to the body over which he kneeled and replied in a hollow voice: "Here he lies and yet it is not he. The best of him is gone.

He tried to save me from these savage men. For that he died;" and the boy rocked back and forth over his father's body, moaning as though his heart would break.

The Mammoth bowed his head, overwhelmed, crushed as the terrible truth drove itself home. "Dead?" he groaned dismally. "I too will stay. I will not leave him."

"Nor I," said the Rhinoceros solemnly.

All three remained with heads bent low, paying their last tribute to the Mousterian chief. The Mammoth was the first to recover himself. He stamped his feet and flapped his ears. His eyes reddened like hot coals. "Who killed him?" he screamed. "If one of these men did it, I will trample the life out of every one of them, even though I have to climb over the top of this mountain to do it."

Kutnar was on his feet in an instant. "Who killed him? I do not know. But there is one who caused all this, my traitor-friend the Hyena Man. I heard his voice above us. He must die." He darted across the ledge and picked up his sling and pebble-pouch which had fallen there during the melee, then leaped down the slope and looked above him. A man was ascending the Scarp. Kutnar ran to one side of the rock-shelter and began climbing up.

High above his head, Gonch was ascending leisurely, feeling comfortable in the thought that Totan and Pic were no more. He had seen Totan's

body and would have relished a glimpse of Pic's but the Mammoth and Rhinoceros stood on guard below and he dared not descend. However Pic was as dead as Totan, he felt reasonably certain and now that his enemies were out of the way, he planned to return to Castillo and seize the reins of authority. Some day, Fate permitting, he might even venture into the Mousterian country and take Pic's place. The possibilities of his future were unlimited. He might become the foremost potentate in all the world.

He was looking behind him now and then from force of habit. There were none left to pursue him but he had not seen Pic's body and therefore could not feel absolutely sure. As he snatched one of his hurried glances, to his horror, he saw a figure scaling the cliff below him. For an instant he thought that the Mousterian chief must have risen from the grave to destroy him, then he breathed a sigh of relief. It was not Pic but a much smaller man. One of his own people perhaps. He halted until the other came near enough to be recognized. Gonch stared at him in amazement then snarled hatefully, "Kutnar! What brings the boy here?"

As if in reply, Kutnar shook his fist at the Muskman and cried out, "Traitor, you shall not escape me this time," and climbed up as fast as he could.

Gonch laughed a loud bitter laugh. The boy carried no ax and he was at a disadvantage, attacking from below. The Muskman seized a stone from the wall behind him and raised it above his

head in both hands. There he stood howling derision at his pursuer.

Kutnar heard but he only climbed the faster. His was a lithe active body. In his brain lurked the inborn gift of clear-headedness and sure-footedness working in perfect harmony. But never had his climbing powers been subjected to so severe a test. In places the wall, for rods at a time appeared so smooth and unbroken that it seemed impossible for a human being to adhere to it; but Kutnar not only did adhere but continued upward at an astonishing rate. His toes and fingers found every minute wrinkle and crevice. His legs were the sustaining members, his shoulders the windlass, his arms the tackle of a self-propelling derrick lifting itself in mid-air. Kutnar was expending his energy at a lavish rate. He might have rested temporarily on the occasional rock-shelves that marked his route. His enemy was resting and he could have done likewise. In a saner moment he would have so chosen but now he was insane; a maniac bearing a death message to the man whose perfidy had destroyed the one he loved best. The human derrick was strained almost to the breaking point and still it continued to propel itself skyward. Not until Kutnar reached an unusually deep shelf which gave him more than standing room, did he pause even for a moment; then he halted and looked up. The Muskman stood waiting above him. Kutnar could see his open red mouth and white teeth. Gonch's face wore an expression of cruel

eagerness such as a panther wears when about to spring from the tree branches upon a fawn passing beneath. His back was set against the wall, both hands raised high above his head. He was preparing to hurl the stone.

Kutnar braced his legs, secured a firm foothold and whirled his sling. Gonch trembled. He could almost feel the pebble striking his skull with deadly precision. He faltered, tossed the stone wildly and fled in a panic up the wall behind him. The boy dodged the stone as it fell but now the Muskman was beyond effective throwing range and so Kutnar ceased whirling his sling and followed after. "The traitor must die," repeated itself over and over in his mind and drove out all thought of himself, a stripling pitted against a full-grown man. His breath came in gasps, for what with the struggle below and his exhausting climb, the limit of his endurance was nearly reached. There came over him the fear that Gonch might escape after all and so he strove desperately, forcing his shaking legs to carry him on.

Gonch was comparatively fresh and perhaps it was just as well for the boy that he had abandoned all thought of fight. The Muskman had become obsessed with fear of the magic sling whose deadly accuracy he had become familiar with through long experience. Kutnar's legs would no longer aid him in that heart-breaking ascent. The sling launched its bolt but in his anxiety, he missed his aim. Gonch was struggling up the slippery rock

when he heard the stone whizz close by his head and click against the wall. The sounds spurred him on but in his over-eagerness he slipped and dropped back several feet. This slip terrified him.

Kutnar felt in his pouch and drew forth another pebble—the last. He had but one chance left. He reloaded his weapon but he neither whirled nor threw at his enemy now moving slowly but surely to safety. He was waiting until his heart would ease its pounding and his muscles could be brought under control for the final cast.

Gonch had recovered himself and was making progress. No second missile had followed the first to shake his nerves. Desperation gave him courage for the supreme effort required. His hands were raised to within a few yards of the crowning pinnacles of the Scarp. Once ahold of them he could drag himself to the top—and safety.

Kutnar saw. His heart had ceased palpitating. He no longer trembled. His body was as cold as ice. "That man must die," he said for the last time. The thong hissed. Every ounce of strength in the guiding muscles followed the stone in its flight and sent it whizzing to the mark.

Gonch doubled up. His feet jerked convulsively as the death-messenger crashed into his ribs. His hands had already found anchorage. He might have pulled himself to the top, had not the sling-stone bid him halt. His lower limbs half-paralyzed, dabbed feebly against the smooth wall in a vain effort to relieve the weight of his body,

thrown suddenly upon his arms. Once, twice, thrice, his feet sought support, then his muscles relaxed, his body straightened out and he hung suspended in mid-air.

Beneath him, his destroyer watched and waited, cold and implacable as an avenging Fate. The Muskman yet clung to the coping fluttering like a wounded bird. Slowly his head fell back and turned so that he could see over his right shoulder. His face blanched, his eyes started from their sockets at sight of the vast emptiness beneath him. Gradually his grip relaxed. He made a last effort for one more moment of sweet life, then with a despairing screech, down he fell. His body shot along the face of the Scarp until it encountered a rugged projection which sent it bounding clear of the rock-wall. Down, down it fell, whirling in space, finally crashing to its last resting place at the base of the Scarp. The traitor had come into his own at last and his body lay amid those of his comrades who now shared their lot with the true author of their destruction.



"DOWN HE FELL"

XXVIII

HOW Kutnar descended the precipitous wall of the Scarp, he never knew nor did he care. A slip of hand or foot would have sent him to his death, a thing he feared not, for it meant only peace and rest to his aching heart. His motions were those of one imprudent and entirely heedless of danger. He lowered his body from one rock projection to another in such reckless fashion that the wonder is he did not fall. Some good angel must have been watching over him. His long journey downward was entirely without mishap and he reached the foot of the Scarp in safety.

Here a tremendous surprise awaited him. Pic's body had disappeared. In its stead, a man sat upon the rock-platform with feet dangling over the edge. His body was bruised and bleeding. His eyes were closed and his head hung forward upon his chest. Had not the Mammoth's trunk curled around his waist, given him support, he must have fallen. But he was alive for his muscles twitched feebly and he mumbled strange words that neither Hairi nor Wulli could understand.

For an instant, Kutnar stared open-mouthed unable to realize the great mercy that some good

spirit had reserved as his portion. "Alive!" he said in a low voice as though fearing to disturb the dead. "I am dreaming. It cannot be."

"Alive, yes he is. Oowee, oowee!" squealed the Rhinoceros jumping up and down with joy. "And now you too are safe."

Kutnar sprang to his father with a glad cry and threw his arms about him. Pic opened his eyes. "Kutnar," he murmured feebly; then his eyes closed again and he rambled on deliriously about wolves and hyenas and snow and various other things that had not the remotest connection with the present occasion. It was a most unintelligible discourse but his audience listened with rapt attention and beamed happily, for it all meant that Pic was alive.

Yes he still lived, thanks to his great strength and endurance. But for them, he could not have survived the terrible battering he had received. His body was a mass of welts and contusions, the result of merciless pounding. Scarcely a square inch of it had been spared by the Castilian clubs. No man could have lived under a third of those blows, had they been delivered by flint-axes, which cleaved through the flesh and inflicted ghastly wounds. Pic had demonstrated with his own body that ineffective weapons made not only poor hunters but poor warriors as well. However he was not yet out of danger in spite of his having survived the damage inflicted by his enemies. Bad bruises, loss of blood and resulting weakness might have

finally put an end to him, had it not been for the care and treatment bestowed upon him by his friends.

Hairi found a spring bubbling from the mountain slope and brought a trunkful, doling it out to Kutnar who laved his father's wounds and cooled his fever. The boy then hurried to the grotto of the underground vault and returned with Pic's bearskin robe. The invalid was bundled up in this and tucked away under the rock-shelter to rest. This done, Kutnar went off to re-fill his pebble pouch and kill food for Pic so that he might eat when he had rested and regained his strength. Meanwhile Hairi and Wulli stood guard. When Kutnar returned, the two beasts descended the mountain slope to graze and the boy went on duty. Such nursing could not help but produce results. Pic recovered rapidly and before many days, the quartette was ready to depart. Still bundled up in his bearskin suit, Pic was lifted to the Mammoth's neck and with Kutnar sitting behind to steady him, they marched down the slope and around the mountain to the River Pas. They crossed this and went north along the right bank until they came in sight of Castillo. A faint haze arising in the distance from the cave-entrance, showed that it was still the home of men. "What will they do with Totan and Gonch gone?" said Kutnar, and his father answered, "Rather what will they do now that they no longer have a boy to feed them?"

This was the last they saw of the Castillan

stronghold, for here they turned in the direction of the rising sun. A long journey lay before them but their hearts were light and full of joy of companionship. Kutnar was found, Pic was himself again and now they were bound for a goal of rest and contentment—home.

The End





**This book is under no circumstances to be
taken from the Building**

[illegible]



